















A HISTORY OF ENGLISH FURNITURE









# A HISTORY OF ENGLISH FURNITURE



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PLATE I (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

1. GILT CHAIR COVERED IN NEEDLEWORK

HEIGHT, 3 FEET 6 INCHES

PROPERTY OF  
THE VISCOUNT ENFIELD

2. GILT CONSOLE-TABLE

HEIGHT, 2 FEET 11 INCHES

PROPERTY OF  
W. H. LEVER, Esq.









# A HISTORY OF ENGLISH FURNITURE

BY PERCY MACQUOID, R.I.

With Plates in Colour after Shirley Slocombe,  
and numerous Illustrations selected and  
arranged by the Author

THE AGE OF MAHOGANY



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## CHAPTER I



THE first twenty-five years of the eighteenth century represent an almost stationary period in our artistic history ; originality of design being practically quiescent for that time, with a dangerous tendency towards the destruction of what had previously existed. The advent of the line of Brunswick in 1714 brought about no immediate radical change in taste, for the fashions introduced at Court were those of an unimportant German Principality, a vulgar copy of Versailles. George I., on his sudden elevation to the English throne, did not attempt any serious encouragement of the English arts, his tastes remaining faithful to Herrenhausen, and his social sympathies with Kilmansegg and Schulenburg. The certain amount of opulent taste strongly marked by foreign preference that crept in amongst our more sober and national fashions was confined to the aristocracy and successful speculators, and very indicative of the occupation of the throne by a foreigner. Horace Walpole, writing of this time, said : -

‘We are now arrived at the period in which the arts were sunk to the lowest ebb in Britain. The new monarch was devoid of taste, and not likely at an advanced age to encourage the embellishment of a country to which he had little partiality.’

To this wave of spurious French taste, brought over from Herrenhausen, a more direct and purer influence was soon fortunately established by the new era of decoration that emanated from the Court of Philip, the Regent of France ; for on the death of Louis XIV. the sombre state of French society burst into fresh life, being accompanied by great patronage for original capacity in all the industrial arts. This patronage came from a class that had not previously existed, for the



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rich speculator in stock had now become a member of society through the genius of the Scotsman, John Law; and the financial upheaval that took place in France under his auspices was accompanied here by the South Sea Scheme which, by 1720, had developed into a delirium, the attention of both nations being diverted from politics to the frenzy of speculation. For the benefit of those raised from comparative obscurity to sudden wealth, extravagant changes were originated, although some years elapsed before any real elegance and delicacy were established in the social surroundings of the English. The period of decoration known in France as 'Regence' inaugurated forms which there developed into the style termed Louis Quinze, and here formed a basis from which the so-called school of Chippendale sprang, for ever since the Restoration and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and in spite of the war and consequent protectionary legislation, French fashions and furniture had slowly gained ground in England.

Technical excellence in carving, originality of touch with traditional treatment, was for the first twenty years of the eighteenth century still influenced by Gibbon. In 1714 this artist was appointed Master Carver in wood to George I., with a salary of eighteenpence a day, and enjoyed this cautious acknowledgment of his genius for seven years until his death, which took place in August 1721. That the contemporary appreciation and influence of his work was even greater than it is to-day is shown in the criticism written by Horace Walpole :—

'There is no instance of a man before Gibbons who gave to wood the loose and airy lightness of flowers and chained together the various productions of the elements with a free disorder natural to each species.'

In the carving of this school, ornament interspersed with bands of flowers and fruit was an integral part of the structure of furniture, such as chairs and console-tables: the proportions were large and round, and the aim of the detail was realism. Soon after 1725 the ornament became flattened, introducing forms from the new French school, and



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took its place more on the surfaces of the furniture. At this time the plain panels of wardrobes and cabinets, enlivened in the three former reigns with marqueterie, were now enriched with mouldings and framed in carving and decorated borders, and furniture as a whole became lighter and smaller in character; for in every period of style elaboration of detail increases and its scale decreases as the evolution proceeds. Another cause leading to delicacy of treatment was the use of mahogany, which about 1720 began to supersede walnut. At first it was confined to the leaders of fashion, as the owners of the large houses contented themselves with their walnut furniture, gilt tables, and lacquer-work, and continued to have these made. Consequently at this transitional period we find that English furniture was constructed simultaneously in oak, walnut, and mahogany.

The heavy oak beds, chairs, and tables of former times soon drifted from the large houses into important farmhouses, being there supplemented by unpretending and practical oak-panelled cupboards and dressers of local construction, more or less traditional in design but seldom in the new contemporary taste. Fig. 1 is a dresser of this type, of long shape and rough construction. The upper portion is



FIG. 1.—OAK DRAWER. Property of C. E. KEMPE, Esq.



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divided into six drawers framed in bolection mouldings of the beginning of the century; a bold surbase moulding, stopped on the outside styles, separates the upper from the lower portion; below is a series of panels of large and small size, the latter forming the doors: the colour of the oak is light and almost modern in tone. Tall corner cupboards of oak,

panelled in this manner, were also very usual pieces of furniture in small households. Sometimes their doors are found inlaid with a star in black and yellow wood.

Great tracts of country at this time were still waste, uncultivated, and undrained, and the difficulties of locomotion preserved characteristics of local style, as every village of any size possessed a carpenter who repeated the models he had at hand. The counties of Suffolk and Norfolk were, however, by 1725, agriculturally far in advance of their time, and good representative pieces of mahogany were made there between 1725 and 1750. Farms let in these counties at the

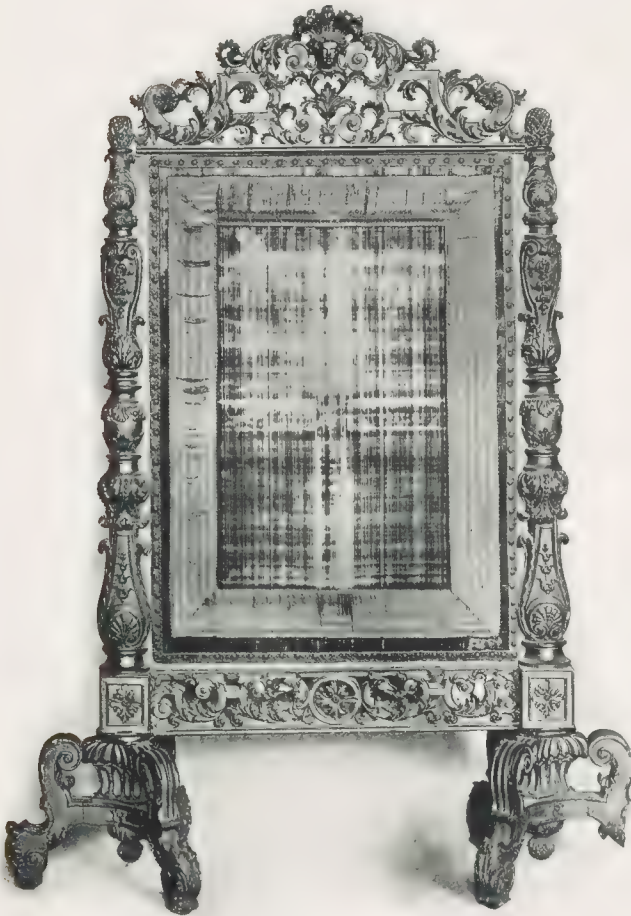


FIG. 2.—GILT FIRE-SCREEN. HAMPTON COURT PALACE.



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beginning of the century for £180 had in thirty years risen to a rental of £800, so that the better position of landlord and tenant was naturally accompanied by domestic comforts and the acquisition of novelties.

In the rich town and country houses a very gorgeous style of gilded furniture, still suggestive of foreign taste, became fashionable shortly before 1720. Certain characteristics of this type had existed during the reigns of Charles II. and James II., but the development of gilt furniture that took place between the years 1714 and 1730, though lasting so comparatively short a time and confined to so limited a patronage, is a very distinct feature of the times. Reception-rooms were furnished with gilt console-tables, gilt sofas, chairs, and card-tables. The console-tables, at first of bracket form with marble tops, were placed against the walls and between the windows, and often surmounted by tall looking-glasses. The designs of these console-tables were generally bold, florid, and frequently exaggerated, carved in soft wood, and heavily gilt on a jesso ground. Sometimes portions of animals, human-headed, formed part of the bracket; in early specimens an eagle displayed often composed the support. On the knees of the cabriole legs were carved lion masks, shells, or a contorted face. This human grotesque face, which varies little and originally borrowed from the designs of Beran and Boulle, was almost entirely confined to gilt furniture. Two early pieces of this gilt furniture in good



FIG. 3.—GILT GUÉRIDON. Height, 4 feet 10 inches. HAMPTON COURT PALACE.



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taste are figs. 2 and 3. The screen is of walnut and most delicately carved in strap-work clothed with fine arabesques, the ornamentation on the balusters recalling contemporary silver-plate. The treatment of the plinths forming the bases is bold and original, and the flattened C scrolls of the cresting and the work on the balusters prove this interesting

piece to be about the date 1690. The centre of the screen is of the original red velvet trimmed with a broad silver galon. The guéridon or torchère (fig. 3) is one of a pair, and resembles the screen in treatment; these were used for silver or china perfume jars or a branching candelabrum. In both these pieces the carving forms part of the structure: an impression of size combined with richness is thus obtained which is not seen in later work where the carving is confined to the surfaces.

Fig. 4, a guéridon, one of a pair at Penshurst, is of about the same date, though more simple in form; the vase shape supporting the top is in early guéridons concave in form, as in this instance, and those at Knole (fig. 77, 'Age of Walnut'), which bear the hall-mark of 1690, also show this characteristic. In the Penshurst example the lower portion of the baluster is square-sided and carved with husk design and strap-work of the period on a matted ground; this is surmounted by the flattened capping found on tables and chairs of the time; the decorated scrolls of the base are rich and rapid in their curves, but the claw-feet are probably additions to give sta-



FIG. 4.—GILT GUÉRIDON. Height, 4 feet 4 inches.  
Property of LORD DE LISLE AND DUDLEY.



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bility, and the finish of the curve is somewhat marred by their introduction. Fig. 5, one of a pair, is solid in shape and of the beginning of the eighteenth century; the vase-shaped top is here bulbous in form and decorated with the plain acanthus that is found on so much of this gilt furniture, the proportions are unequal, and the introduction of the Ionic capital in the centre of the shaft arrests its grace. The scrolling of the feet, ending in whorls, is bold and simple. This pair of torchères was probably the property of the Duke of Marlborough before he moved into Blenheim, as they precede in style the other gilt furniture found there. In fig. 6 the vase-shaped top is more spreading and is ornamented with a well-cut acanthus; the shaft is cylindrical and plain, save for some husk pendants in low relief; the scrolls of the base turn upwards and are surmounted by the grotesque head introduced so frequently about this time. Fig. 7, from Penshurst, is of the early part of George I.'s reign; the carvings and proportions of the baluster are large in character, but the acanthus on the legs, connected by swags of drapery, show the approach of a new epoch in decoration. The gilding on all these pieces is of the



FIG. 5.—GILT GUÉRIDON. Height, 4 feet 8 inches.  
Property of the DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.



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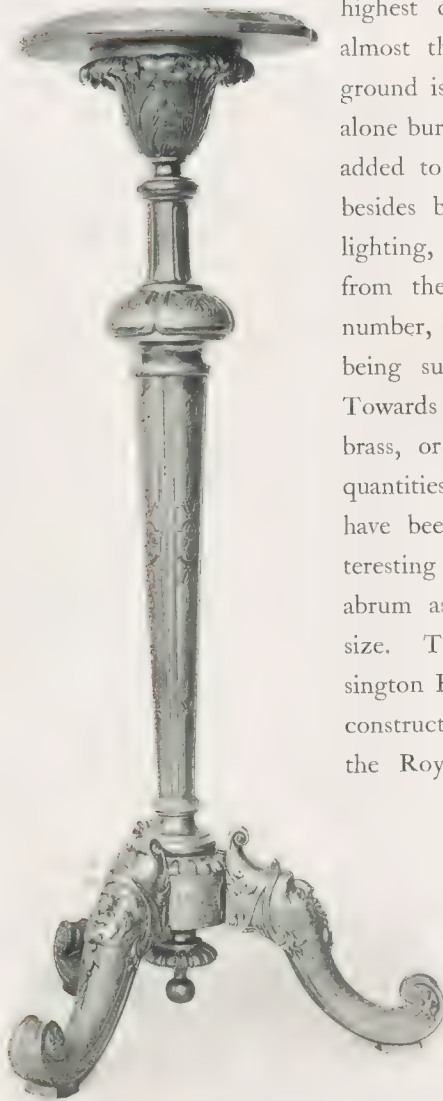


FIG. 6.—GILT GUÉRIDON. Height, 4 feet 9 inches. Property of the HON. CHARLOTTE MARIA LADY NORTH and R. EDEN DICKSON, Esq.

highest quality, beautiful in colour, and giving almost the appearance of hammered metal. The ground is dull throughout, the carved portions are alone burnished. These torchères must have greatly added to the stateliness of large reception-rooms, besides being an additional convenience for their lighting, as until the reign of Charles II., candelabra from the ceiling were small in size and few in number, the remainder of the light in those days being supplied by metal sconces on the walls. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, crystal, brass, or wooden candelabra were made in large quantities, but even then the lighting could not have been good or well considered, and it is interesting to notice how few lights such a candelabrum as fig. 8 can hold in comparison to its size. This is one of a pair formerly at Kensington Palace and of about the date 1700. It is constructed entirely of wood and surmounted by the Royal crown; midway on the shaft is an

ornament in the shape of a canopy with tassels, again repeated lower down, and from which spring ten exceedingly graceful and ingenious, widespreading arms, each supporting a candle cup. Few rooms could have contained more than three or four of these large objects, and the candles they held, even supplemented by those in the sconces, must have given a some-



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what indifferent light in the large rooms of the time, and in great contrast to the blaze of candles that formed the lighting later in the century. The lighting at the coronation banquet of George II. was evidently somewhat of a novelty, for in an interesting letter of Mrs. Delany, wherein she describes the dresses, she appears much struck by the lighting of Westminster Hall :—

‘The room was finely illuminated, and though there were 1800 candles, besides what was on the tables, they were all lighted in less than three minutes by an invention of Mr. Heidegger’s, which succeeded to the admiration of all spectators ; the branches that held the candles were all good gilt and in the form of pyramids. I leave it to your lively imagination after this to have a notion of the splendour of the place so filled and so illuminated.’

The snuffing of all these candles must have been a very serious and difficult matter. It is difficult to realise that in the seventeenth century the furniture, silks, and velvets, and the people who used them, could have been but little seen, though we gather that the ladies’ complexions were calculated with a view of overcoming this difficulty. Want of light was comparatively unimportant to the business of the evening, which was chiefly connected with the card-tables, on which silver candlesticks were used. In Swift’s sarcastic directions to a butler and footman we get an amusing glimpse into the manners and customs



FIG. 7.—GILT GUÉRIDON. Height, 4 feet 8 inches.  
Property of LORD DE LISLE AND DUDLEY.



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of servants and the trials connected with lighting by candles. The sconces alluded to would have been gilt mirrors bearing candle branches.

'Let your sockets be full of grease to the brim, with the old snuff at the top, and then stick on fresh candles. It is true, this may endanger their falling, but the candles



FIG. 8. WOOD CANDELABRUM. Property of SIR SPENCER C. PONSONBY FANE.





FIG. 80. GLASS CHANDELIER. Property of FRANK GREEN, Esq.



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will appear so much the longer and handsomer before company. When your candle is too big for the socket, melt it to a right size in the fire, and to hide the smoke, wrap in a paper half-way up. Sconces are great wasters of candles, therefore your business must be to press the candle with both your hands into the socket, so as to make it lean in such a manner that the grease may drop all upon the floor, if some lady's head-dress or gentleman's periwig be not ready to intercept it; you may likewise stick the candle so loose that it will fall upon the glass of the sconce and break into shatters: this will save yourself much labour, for the sconces spoiled cannot be used. Snuff the candles with your fingers and throw the snuff on the floor, then tread it out to prevent stinking: this method will very much save the snuffers from wearing out; you ought also to snuff them close to the tallow, which will make them run and so increase the perquisite of the cook's kitchen stuff, for she is the person you ought in prudence to be well with. And snuff the candles at supper as they stand on the table, which is much the surest way, because, if the burning snuff happens to get out of the snuffers, you have a chance that it may fall into a dish of soup, sack posset, rice milk, or the like, when it will be immediately extinguished with very little stink.'

Fig. 8*a* is a graceful glass double-tiered chandelier, one of a pair made about the end of the seventeenth century. It consists of a series of globular and vase-shaped forms, cut in diamond pattern, and two tiers of glass arms with candle cups. The simplicity of arrangement is effective, the design being suggested by the brass Dutch chandeliers of the time, though the wiring and fittings for electric light somewhat detract from the delicacy of its proportions. The manufacture of glass was an important industry in England at this period, and had in a great measure supplanted the foreign importation.

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century the sideboard was still unknown, but the console-table, introduced here from France, formed a very prominent feature in the furniture of important rooms, and probably started the idea of mahogany side-tables with marble tops: a great many examples of consoles in soft wood gilt exist, which, doubtless, were used as sideboards.

Fig. 9 is an early specimen of about 1700, and one of a pair. The top is a thick slab of black and white marble resting on a frame carved with the spiral evolute termed 'wave pattern,' in this instance singularly free and simple. It is supported by an eagle of remarkable





FIG. 9. GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches. Property of the  
HON. CHARLOTTE MARIA LADY NORTH and R. EDEN DICKSON, Esq.



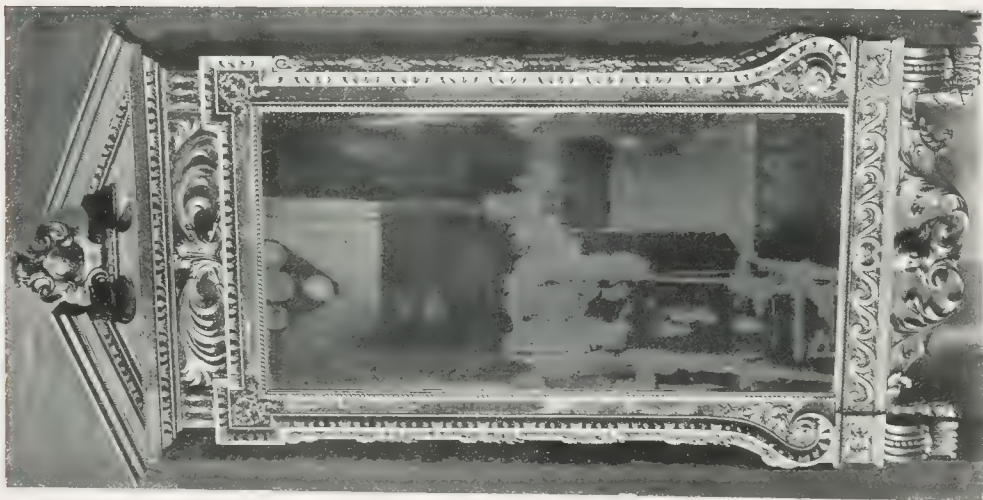


FIG. 10. GILT MIRROR. Height, 6 feet 6 inches.  
Property of the Hon. CHARLOTTE MARY LADY NORTH and  
R. EDEN DICKSON, Esq.



FIG. 11. GILT MIRROR.  
Height, 6 feet 6 inches.  
Property of LORD DE LISLE AND DUDLEY.





FIG. 12.—GILT MIRROR. Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.

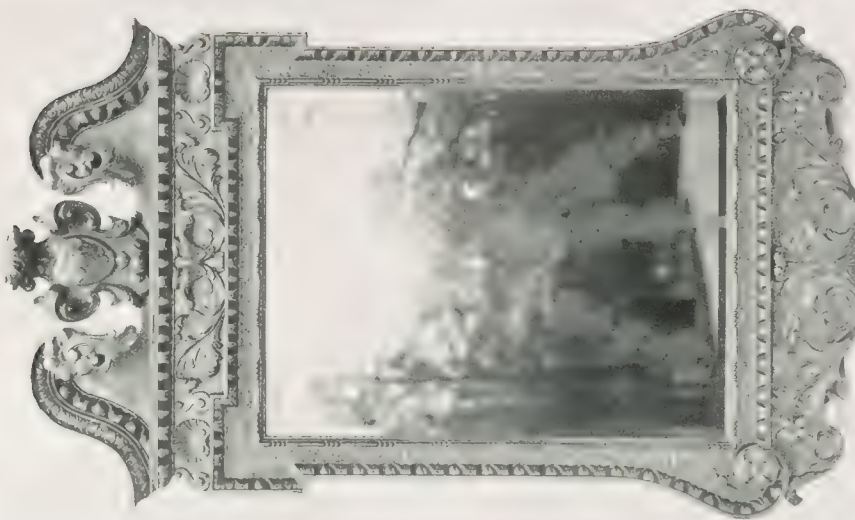


FIG. 13.—GILT MIRROR. Property of S. T. FISHER, Esq.



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strength and vitality ; the grip of the claws upon the rock is tremendous in its strength and boldness, and the treatment of the plumage shows



FIG. 14.—GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches ; top, 2 feet 2 inches square.  
Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



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English carving of the time at its very best; the base is plain except for a simple rosette banding, and all the wood is thickly and richly gilt; additional brackets at the side support the great weight of the top. A gilt mirror, which is architectural in construction and belongs to the console-table, is shown in fig. 10; it is not by the same hand, and perhaps a year or two later in date. The broken pediment forming the cresting is admirable in proportion and possesses the original ornament to the centre plinth, but the carving of the acanthus sprays and the female



FIG. 15.—GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches; length, 3 feet; depth, 1 foot 8 inches.  
Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



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bust at the base are lacking in vitality ; the tassels of oak-leaves and acorns at the sides show a want of spontaneity, and are a feeble deviation from the garlands of Gibbon ; the gilding is exceedingly beautiful, great



FIG. 16.—GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 10 inches ; length, 4 feet 9 inches ; depth, 2 feet 2 inches. Property of the DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.



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variety being obtained by the burnished ornament lying on a sanded ground.

Fig. 11 is a tall mirror of about 1718, made to go over a console-table but not to form part of it; the same motive of the broken pediment, rather more ornate in character than the last specimen, is adopted, and the centre is a lamp with flames; the frieze is carved with a mask between acanthus sprays, the fascia on each side being decorated with swags of drapery; the framing of the sides is composed of oak-leaves,



FIG. 17.—GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 7 inches.



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and the flat is decorated with shells and pateræ; there is no plinth, as the mirror is intended to hang on a wall, and the pendant is carved with the lion mask, now so rapidly becoming a fashion, and oak-leaves ending in eagle heads. The carving of this lower portion is full of character, and superior to the rest of the frame.

Fig. 12 is a mirror of oval form of about 1728, with a richly carved and very interesting frame belonging to the school of Gibbon. It has characteristics of later design, especially in the mouldings surrounding the glass; the cresting is formed of a finely modelled head framed in five ostrich feathers and edged with broad foliated sprays; at the side are long cornucopiæ filled with fruit and flowers, realistic in treatment but wanting in the light touch of Gibbon; the base is clothed with large sprays of acanthus bordered with garlands of fruit and flowers. This mirror was probably designed for a room with florid surroundings and richly covered walls, as velvets, silks, and Gobelin tapestry were still in great demand. We read that in Montagu House, Portman Square, in 1750, there was even a room hung with tapestry made of feathers. Mrs. Montagu was the author of an essay on Shakespeare, and the chief of the blue-stockings of her day; she gave an annual feast to all the chimney-sweepers in London.

Fig. 13 is a good example of the ordinary type of small gilt mirror of this time.

Fig. 14 is another eagle console-table, one of a pair. Here the top is of wood carved with a strap-work in low relief of French design, clearly showing the influence of the Regence; the execution of both eagle and table suggest that the piece is of country workmanship. Fig. 15 is also one of a pair from Badminton, and the same rather elementary feeling is visible. The design is evidently an arrangement of details seen somewhere and but vaguely remembered by the carver; the drapery serves no purpose, and the useless acanthus growing out of the plinth show that the designer was not here quite in his element; the intro-



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duction of sphinxes with Egyptian head-dresses is interesting, being borrowed directly from the bracket supports of Renaissance furniture. These figures and animals are introduced on later consoles but without the plinth; scrolled or cabriole legs supporting the piece. Fig. 16 is from Blenheim; the design of the legs is suggestive of the taste of Sir John Vanbrugh, who in his efforts to obtain original effects appears merely to have succeeded in producing ugly and eccentric results. Horace Walpole said of this artist 'that he undertook vast designs and composed heaps of littleness; the style of no age, no country, appeared in his works; he broke through all rule and compensated for it by no imagination.'

The wave pattern running along the face of nearly all these console-tables remained a popular decoration for nearly thirty years, and the mahogany side-tables, which ran contemporaneously with the later consoles, show instances of this same design.

About 1720 console-tables became more elegant, with legs of cabriole form. In fig. 17 the top is of marble, and the front and sides of the frame are decorated with a bold egg and tongue moulding and the wave pattern; below this, an open work arabesque, composed of acanthus, fruit, and flowers in the style of Gibbon, unite the legs, which are of unusual strength and grace. These are richly decorated on the shoulders with large escallops and husk pendants, and finish in lions' paws, a type of foot that for a short time superseded the dragon's claw; the gilding of this table is in excellent preservation. In the little console, Plate 1., the satyr face is introduced upon the legs, which, though hocked like a lion, terminate in claw- and ball-feet; the carving approximates that found on the mahogany furniture of 1725; the top is of fleur-de-pêche marble.

In 1722 Sir Robert Walpole commenced the building of Houghton Hall in Norfolk, and throughout this remarkable house are to be found many pieces of gilt furniture; the console-tables are especially interesting





FIG. 18.—GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 3 feet 6 inches; length, 7 feet 5 inches; depth, 3 feet 4 inches.  
Property of the Marquess of CHATHAM.





FIG. 19.—GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 10 inches; length, 8 feet; depth, 2 feet 8 inches.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.





FIG. 209.—GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches, length, 5 feet 1 inch; depth, 2 feet. Property of the Maxwell Esq. of Chotmondel, Pa.



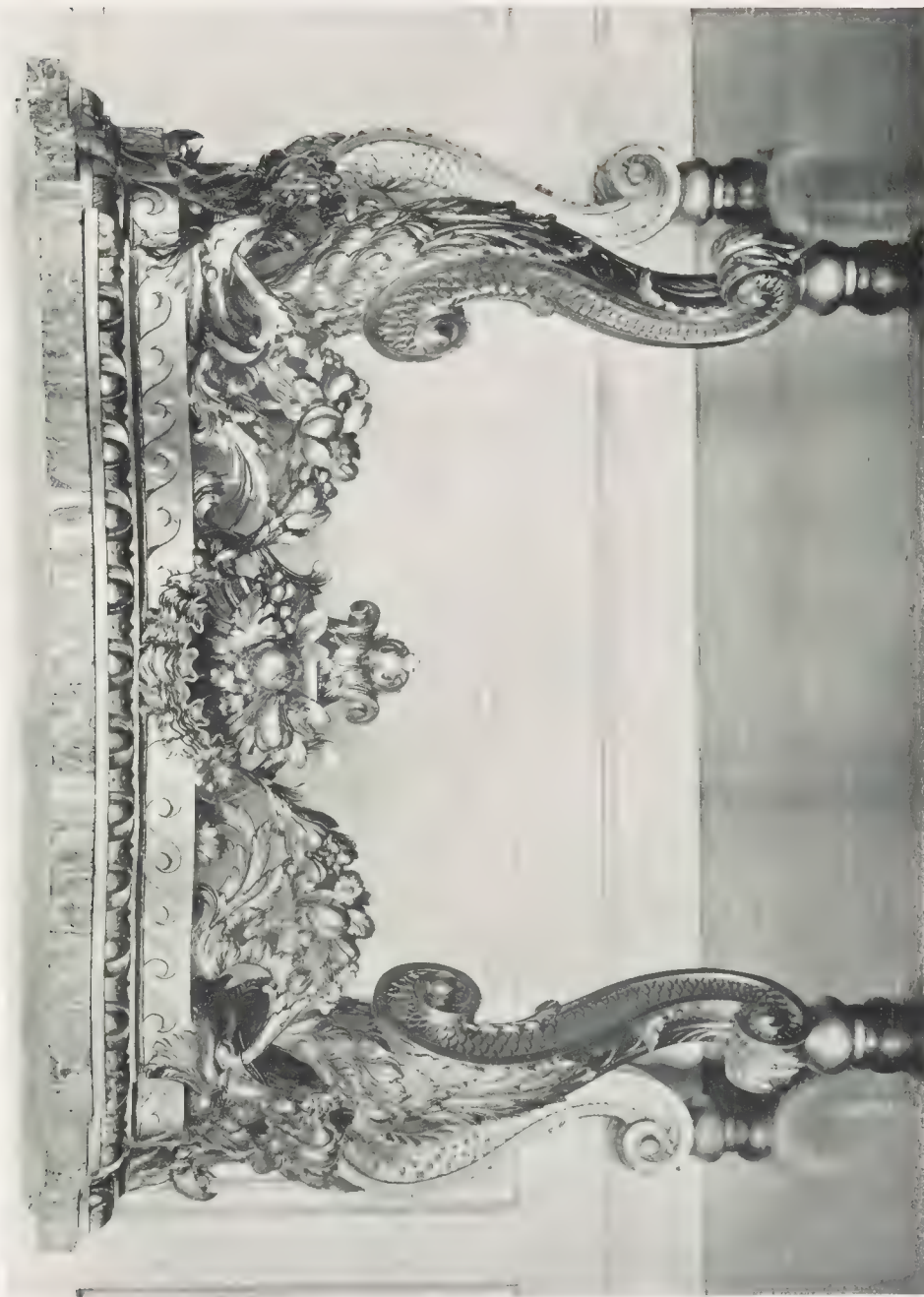


FIG. 21.—GILT CONSOLE-TABLE. Height, 6 feet 8 inches. Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.



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as they are contemporary with the building, many having been designed for the house by Kent and to suit the rather pronounced taste of the Prime Minister. Fig. 18 cannot be before the date 1726, as it bears on the pendant, underneath the framing, Sir Robert's crest encircled by the Garter. In 1725 Walpole persuaded the King to revive the Order of the Bath, described at the time 'as an artful bank of 36 ribands to supply a fund of favors.' Sir Robert was himself invested with this Order, but quitted it for the Garter in 1726, and for this he



FIG. 22.—GILT TABLE. Height, 2 feet 5 inches; length, 3 feet 8 inches.  
Property of the HON. CHARLOTTE MARIA LADY NORTH and R. EDEN DICKSON, Esq.



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was commonly called 'Sir Bluestring' in the pasquinades of the time. In this console the top consists of a large slab of black and yellow marble resting on a carved frieze projecting in five corbels; it is supported on four scrolled legs of debased form, carved on the front with acanthus and guilloched ornament; the sides of these legs, as in all specimens of this class, are scaled. In the centre drops a pendant of acanthus arabesques containing Walpole's crest encircled with the Garter; on either side of the pendant are sphinx figures couchant on scrolls,



FIG. 23.— GILT AND LACQUER TABLE. Height, 2 feet 5 inches; length, 2 feet 11 inches; depth, 1 foot 6 inches. Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.



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surrounded by sprays of acanthus; garlands of oak-leaves connect the pendant with the legs. The execution of the figures is most careful, the heads being exceedingly beautiful, though the legs are very much out of proportion; the whole is carved in soft wood with the original gilding. On this table can be seen the famous bronze group by John of Bologna of his second composition of the 'Rape of the Sabines,' which was presented to Walpole by Horace Mann, the King's Resident at Florence, and behind are the original crimson and cream hangings to the room, a patterned velvet of English make. Fig. 19 is one of a pair of smaller consoles, probably executed by the same hand; the



FIG. 24.—GILT TABLE WITH GLASS TOP.  
Height, 2 feet 6 inches; length, 3 feet.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.

beautiful modelling of the child backed by an escallop, the garlands of oak-leaves and acorns, is altogether better than the design. The rather hideous legs, and general confusion of line, of these last two tables, may be the unadulterated inspiration of Kent, but the animated beauty of the figures is probably due to the skilled foreign craftsman who superintended so much of the furniture at Houghton. Fig. 20 is another table from the same house; the treatment here is more simple, and the design of the acanthus-scolled front, centring in an elaborate shell, is graceful, but the caterpillar-like legs are bare in form, and the four bands of different ornament framing the marble top are quite meaningless in



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FIG. 25. TOP OF SAME.

their relationship to one another. Fig. 21 is a very fine specimen from Longford Castle, where the same motive of the scrolled legs is more artistically treated. The sides of the thick marble top follow in their curves those of the frame; the front is slightly serpentine, and composed of garlands of flowers and fruit centring in a shell, the carving strongly showing the influence of Gibbon; the supports are eagle-headed, terminating in richly decorated scrolls, the wings ingeniously developing into acanthus sprays as they approach the central ornament, the crests of the birds breaking the line of the framing. A gilt table of more ordinary form, and a few years earlier than the last specimen, is shown in fig. 22. The top is covered with a jesso strap-work of French origin in low relief and richly gilt, but the plain separated acanthus on the frame resembles that on the Blenheim guéridon (fig. 5) and is distinctly British. The protruding surface of the front centring in a lion's mask, and the thin lines of ornament no longer forming part of the construction, mark this table as an interesting example of transition. Lions' paws



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are added to the ordinary square foot of the time, forming an artificial fetlock-joint. The gilding is in perfect preservation, and the ornament is burnished on an etched ground. Fig. 23 is a dressing-table, a combination of lacquer and gilding. The top is of black and gold lacquer, and the drawers, resembling in their arrangement the earlier walnut furniture, are also lacquered; the frame and legs are gilt and the latter end in hoof feet, a late example of this peculiarity; the legs are carved in very low relief with a meaningless quasi-French ornament.

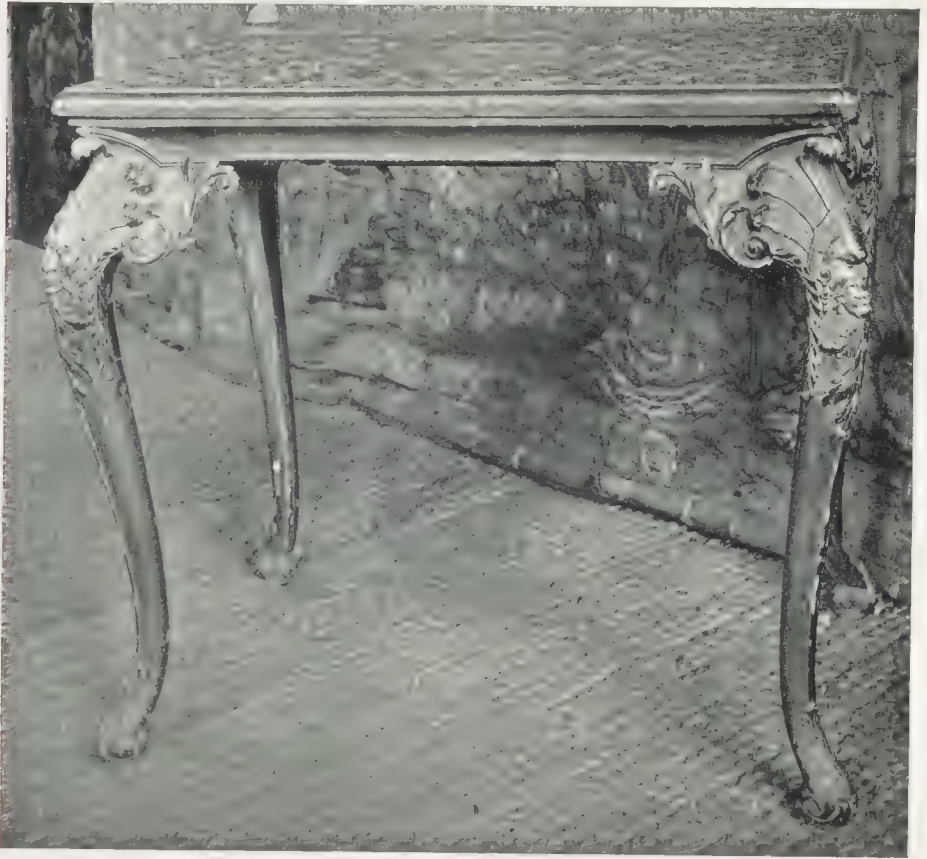


FIG. 26.—GILT TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches. Property of the DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE.



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FIG. 27.—TOP OF GILT TABLE. Property of LADY NUNBURNHOLME.

In the little gilt table (fig. 24) the delicate relief seems to lend itself to the grace of the long, curved legs; the top (fig. 25) is of glass, blackened at the back and with a gilt and cut cipher of Sir Robert Walpole and Katherine, his first wife, in an oval of C scrolls; the frame and square cabriole legs are somewhat Chinese in feeling but unusually elegant. It is of historical interest, being formerly the dressing-table of Sir Robert Walpole, and although before the date of the occupation of Houghton, was always used by him there.

This extraordinary house, designed by Ripley and begun in 1722, was not completed for ten years, and is closely connected with the subject of English furniture. Walpole had taken advantage of the public mania and bought largely in South Sea stock, selling out at the top of the market at £1000 per cent. profit; with the fortune thus acquired he built Houghton, and filled it with pictures and furniture, spending over £200,000—an enormous sum in those days. It is not desirable here



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to describe the interior of Houghton at any length, but the internal fittings are known as the most elaborate effort in mahogany of any house of that time. The staircase is very finely carved in Cuban mahogany; on the first floor are over sixty doors of the same wood, nearly three inches thick, all having carved and gilt mouldings; the window-shutters of these rooms are to match, while one door and over-door in the saloon, a mass of carved mahogany, richly gilt in parts, is known alone to have cost £1000. This door leads to the hall, which is in stone, and a cube of forty feet; from the ceiling stone groups of cupids, considerably over life-size, hang by socles from their



FIG. 28.—GILT SETTEE. Length, 4 feet 6 inches; height, 3 feet 5 inches.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

waists. One entire side of the dining-room is marble, with deep alcoves for two marble sideboards; in this room Walpole collected his friends, where they drank together till the greater number of them fell underneath the table. He had inherited this jovial disposition and love for the pleasures of the table from his father, who at convivial meetings had been accustomed to supply his son's glass with a double portion of wine, adding, 'Come, Robert, you shall drink twice while I drink once, for I will not permit the son in his sober senses to be witness to the intoxication of his father.' These hereditary instincts proved expensive, for in the *Craftsman* of 1730, there was a statement to the effect that the housekeeping bills at Houghton amounted to £1500 a week. These bills appear to have been for solid eating and drinking, which must have induced so material a taste that even the designs of Kent were thought beautiful. Kent was a popular pretender in art, who, not only content with advertising himself as architect, painter, and ornamental gardener, aspired also to the merits of sculpture, and encumbered Westminster Abbey with some of his vulgar conceptions. Horace Walpole says of him:—



FIG. 29.—GILT ARM-CHAIR. Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

'Kent was not only consulted for furniture, as frames of pictures, glasses, beds, tables, chairs, etc., but for plate, for a barge, for a cradle, and so impetuous was fashion, that two great ladies prevailed on him to make designs for their birthday gowns: the one he dressed in a petticoat decorated with columns of the five orders, and the other like a bronze, in a copper-coloured satin with ornaments of gold.'

More examples of furniture, in which the heavy hand of Kent can be traced, will be given later on. It is a relief to turn to the graceful gilt table (fig. 26). The top is in carved and jesso strap-work, the intersection of the leg and frame moulding being unusual; the grotesque face is introduced on the shoulders, in this instance somewhat resembling a Red Indian with plumed head-gear, and is almost identical with the

mask of this type introduced so much on sixteenth-century wood-work; the legs are slender and of cabriole form, finishing in scrolled feet clothed in acanthus; the date of this table is about 1720. Fig. 27 shows the decorated top of a similar table, the design of which is directly adapted from a French pattern. In some instances the orna-

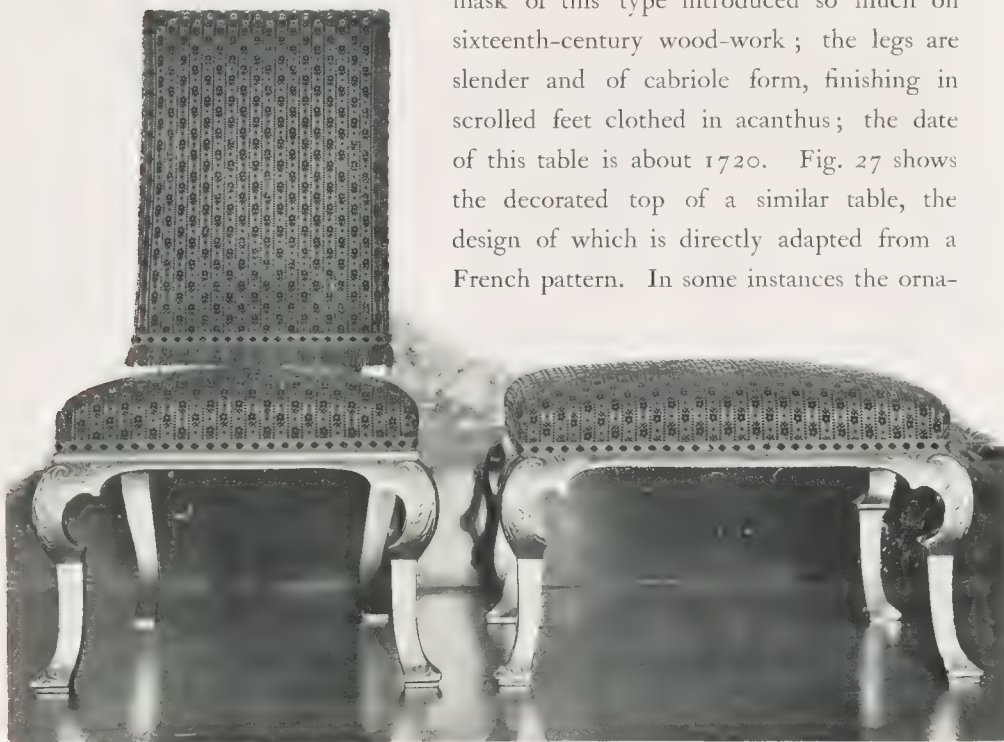


FIG. 30.—GILT CHAIR AND STOOL. Chair—height, 3 feet 9 inches. Stool—height, 1 foot 6 inches; length, 2 feet 4 inches. Property of the DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.





FIG. 31.—GILT CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 4 inches. Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



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mentation was entirely worked in jesso without any carving. It is a popular idea that all the good gilding was done by foreign workmen, but nothing definite is known to prove or disprove the incapacity of the English craftsman in this respect; but that furniture bought abroad was certainly gilt in this country is shown by a letter of Lady Mary Coke's in 1769:—

‘I’ve got my chairs from Paris, without being beholden to anybody; they have paid the duty, but I don’t intend to have them covered with the damask, or have the frames gilt, till after I return from abroad.’

The following extracts from letters of the Countess of Pembroke to Mrs. Clayton, afterwards Lady Sunden and Queen Charlotte’s favourite, show that gilt tables were highly esteemed, the gift in question being a bribe:—

‘1728.

‘DEAR MADAM,—I intended to have seen Herbini’s marble tables, but having by chance mentioned before my Lord that you wanted one, he has, without my knowledge, sent the best he had, which they call verde-antique, to your house, which he intreats your acceptance of as a small testimony of the sincere respect he has for you.’

In another letter to the same lady she says:—

‘I take the liberty to tell you that I have given my Lord’s son all the drawings, prints, and books that are of great value, and the gilt sideboard.’

Sofas, chairs, and stools were also made in this gilt style. Fig. 28 is a sofa, one of a pair of English type, of about 1712. The back is high and the arms terminate in C scrolls. It is covered in a deep sea-green contemporary damask of Spitalfields make, and bordered with the original nailing. The pendant and front of the legs are carved with fan-shaped ornaments and terminate in ball- and claw-feet; the wood-work is dull gilt, on a granulated ground, the ornaments alone being burnished; the back legs are of the early club-foot type. This granulated jesso on legs was generally discontinued about six inches from the ground in order to avoid scaling by wear. Fig. 29 is an arm-chair, one of a dozen belonging to the same suite, and is carved





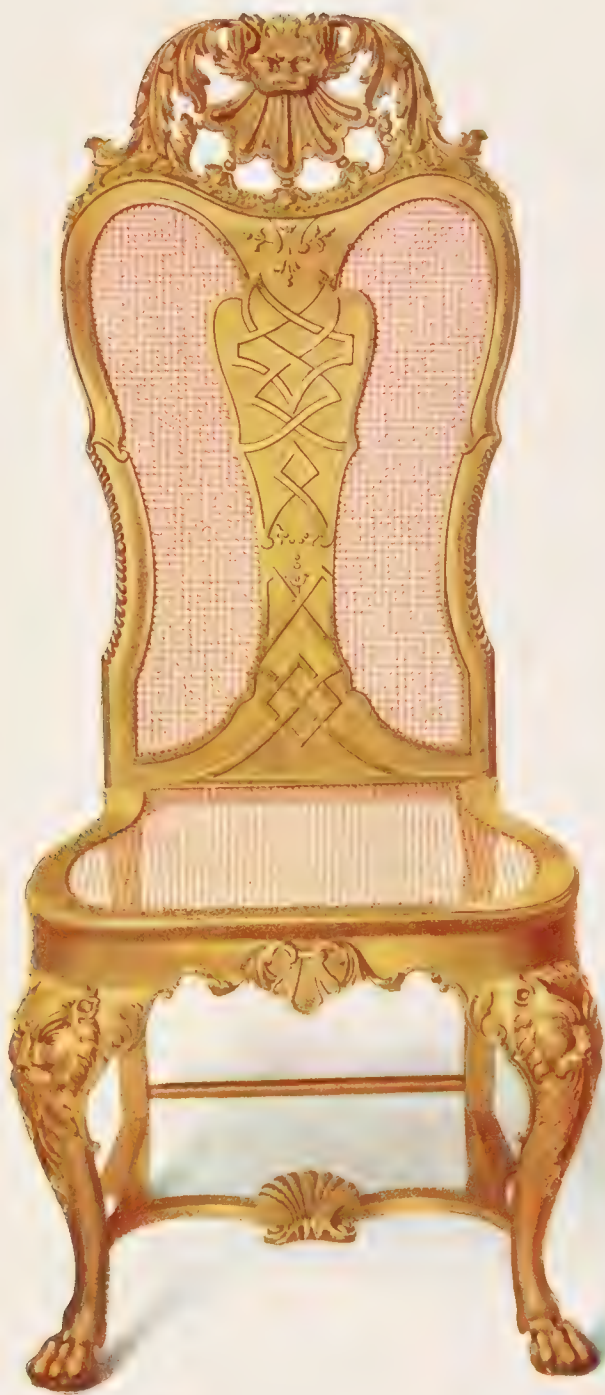


PLATE II (AGE OF MAHOGANY)  
GILT CANED CHAIR

HEIGHT, 4 FEET 1 INCH

PROPERTY OF  
CLARENCE WILSON, Esq.











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and gilt in a similar manner; the back is low, for this form now began to replace the tall and hooped-backed padded chair. The chair and stool (fig. 30), covered in modern velvet, have broken cabriole legs and form part of a suite at Blenheim, of which the console-table has been given in the 'Age of Walnut' (fig. 219). This shape is taken directly from Roman tables and stands of the first century A.D.; but in the antique the treatment is far more delicate, and the incurved point represents the hock of a deer, the foot finishing in a hoof. The same motive is preserved in the chair (fig. 31), one of a dozen, in which the taste of the new Court is perceptible. The back is padded, of hooped form, carved with pendants of husks in low relief and surmounted with the shell that occurs on so much of the Houghton furniture; the legs have a double break, and the shoulders are treated in the same manner as the table from Hardwick (fig. 26); the covering of crimson and cream Genoa velvet is original, and the whole chair is opulent in effect. Fig. 32 is a long couch matching these chairs, but the legs are too short to admit the broken curve; the undulated back is in three divisions: it is upholstered in Genoa velvet and has the original bolsters and cushions; the modern castors somewhat mar the appearance of the feet. At the back of the chair (fig. 31) can be seen one of the mahogany and gilt doors of the room in which this furniture stands, and the velvet-clad walls must have formed a surprising accompaniment to the magnificent pictures that Walpole had collected, and to the brocaded satins and velvets worn by his guests. Although sumptuous and fine in colour the effect must have been rather unreal, and the desire to surprise rather too apparent, but is deeply interesting as representing a state-room of about 1730 in an untouched state. A finer taste in gilt furniture is seen in Plate II., a chair of about 1728, one of a set of twelve. The cresting is high and of perforated design, reverting back to the period of 1690; the back is hooped with a fiddle-shaped splat, and plain but for a rectangular strap-work carved in very low relief,



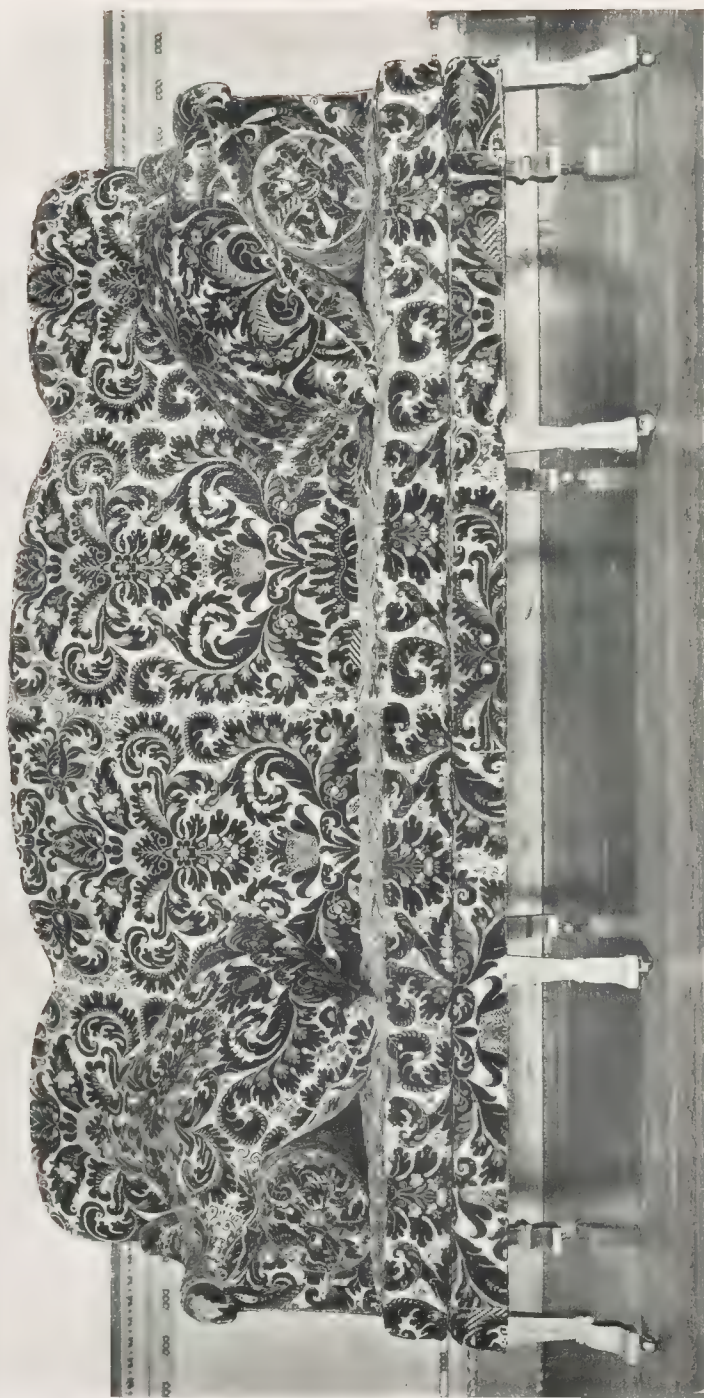


FIG. 32.—GILT COUCH. Length, 7 feet 4 inches; height, 3 feet 10 inches.  
Property of the MARQUÉSS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



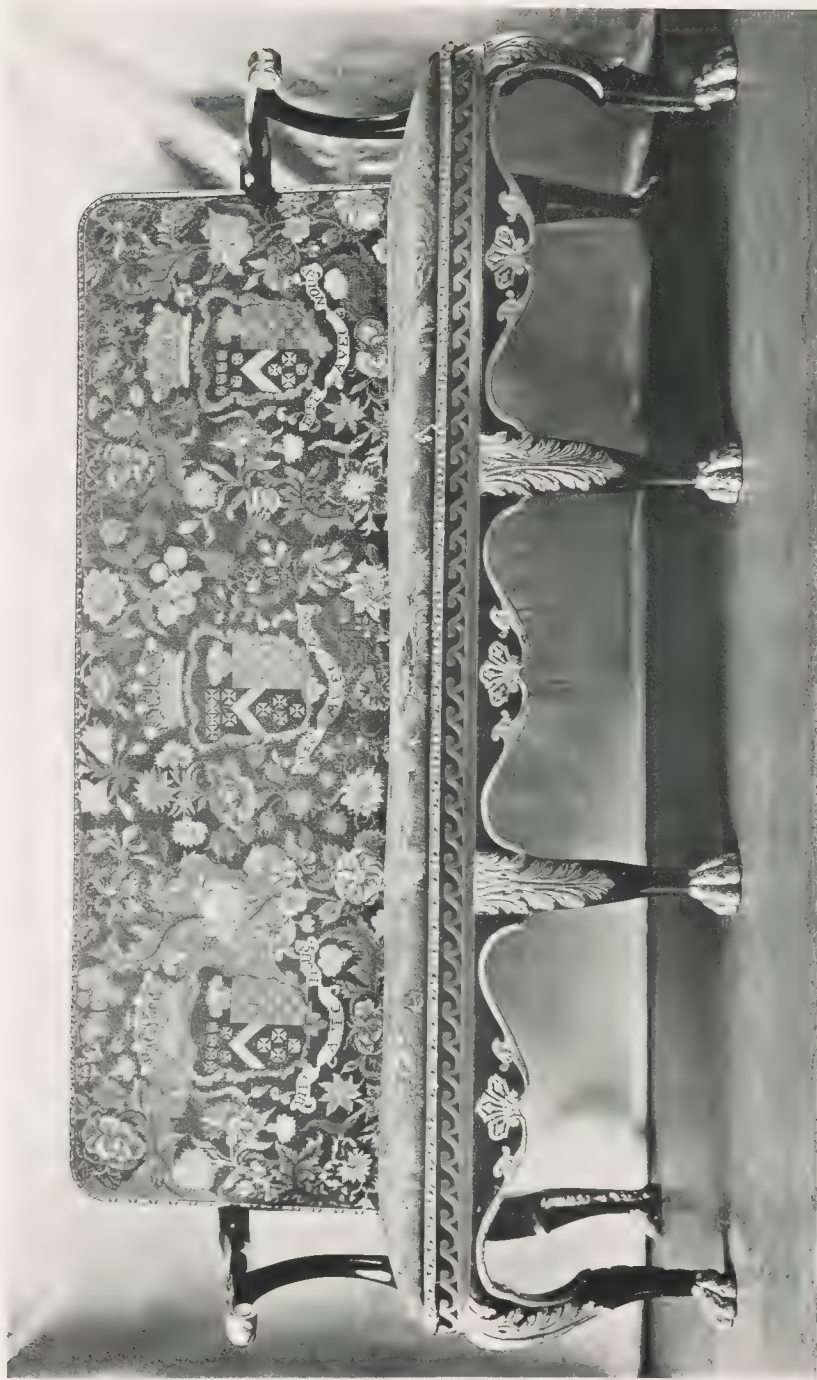


FIG. 33. GILT AND PAINTED SETTEE. Length, 6 feet 2 inches; height, 3 feet 4 inches.  
Property of Lord Fitzhardinge.



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the open space and the seat being filled with fine gilt caning; the front rail is decorated with a small pendant, and the legs are carved with lions' masks and terminate in lions' paws. The height and delicacy of the construction evidently demanded some tie to the legs, four stretchers were therefore introduced, an unusual feature at this time; the gilding is original, and even upon the caning is extraordinarily fresh. Another interesting piece is the arm-chair on Plate 1., some two or three years later in date than the caned chair; the back is low, a shape that was becoming popular owing to the introduction of powder. To save the

velvet and brocaded furniture, short silk flaps were often attached to the backs of chairs and sofas, which could be brought over to the front in order to protect the tops from the grease and powder of the head-dresses of the time. The arms of this chair are serpentine, resembling those of earlier date, the supports are curved backwards, and like all arm-chairs belonging to this period, no longer form a continuation of the front legs, which are shouldered with the favourite Indian mask, here wearing earrings, and finish in small club-feet clothed in acanthus; the covering is the original needlework in 'the Indian Taste,' as it was then called.

Needlework for carpets, as well as coverings to sofas and chairs, was still in great favour, and the fashion



FIG. 34.—GILT AND PAINTED CHAIR.  
Property of LORD FITZHARDINGE.





FIG. 35.—GILT ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 8 inches; width, 2 feet 8 inches; height to top of seat, 1 foot 10 inches. Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



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continued all through the eighteenth century. There are constant allusions to needlework in women's letters and diaries of this time. Mrs. Delany, in 1740, writes to a friend :—

‘I have packed up a box of needlework for you, the great chair that was begun so long ago, with all the worsteds and silks that belong to it, which at your leisure I hope you will finish.’

In 1738 there is an entry in the diary of the Earl of Bristol for what was paid ‘to lining ye needlework carpet,’ and as late as 1774 the Hon. Mrs. Boscawen writes from Holkam, where she was staying :—

‘I think it is curious to see my Ly Leicester work at a tent stitch frame every night by one candle that she sets upon it and no spectacles, it is a carpet she works in shades, tent stitch.’



FIG. 36.—GILT ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 3 inches; width, 1 foot 10 inches. Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



FIG. 37.—GILT CHAIR TO MATCH. Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



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Fig. 33 is a long settee of about 1723, covered with the work of Elizabeth Drax, who married the fourth Earl of Berkeley in 1744; her initials, E. A. B., are introduced under the coat-of-arms. The existing set consists of one long and two small settees and four chairs, representing a most laborious and beautiful effort in needlework, but which certainly formed later coverings than the date of the furniture. In these coverings



FIG. 38.—GILT ARM-CHAIR. Property of the VISCOUNT ENFIELD.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the Berkeley arms are introduced amidst sprays of brilliantly coloured flowers on a brown ground ; this needlework is set in a delicate gilt egg and tongue moulding, the arms are simple and light, but the frame is



FIG. 39.—MAHOGANY BUREAU OR SCRUTOIRE. Height, 3 feet 6 inches ; length, 3 feet 6 inches ; depth, 2 feet. Property of PERCY MACQUOID, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

more solid, and a band of the wave pattern surrounds the seat, which is supported by six curved and hocked legs shouldered with acanthus, and finishing in lions' paws. On most of these legs that suggest the anatomy of a lion, tufts of hair are introduced between the hock and pastern. The wood-work of this settee was originally entirely gilt, the introduction of the

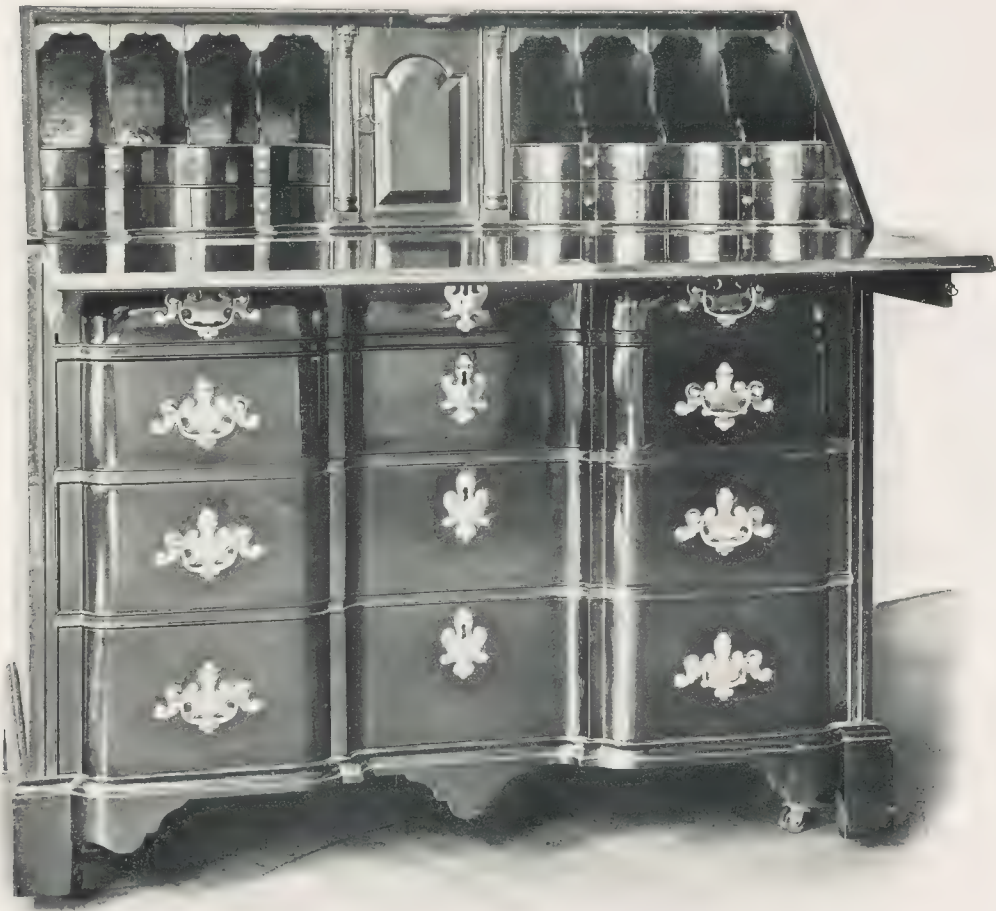


FIG. 40.—THE SAME, OPEN.



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black being probably a Victorian addition. Fig. 34 is a chair belonging to the same suite, the hooped-back form is still preserved and covered with needlework similar to the settee; the proportions are somewhat lost in the photograph, and the added castors give an awkward appearance.

In the legs and frame of the tall-backed and winged arm-chair (fig. 35), of about the date 1725, a definite movement towards the new style can be seen; the back wings, arms, and seat resemble the usual grandfather chair of the period, and are covered in contemporary emerald green velvet trimmed with silver galon; the frame is in a curved projection carved in low relief, with two acanthus scrolls centring in a satyr's mark, the lion legs are distinctly hocked, and shouldered with lions' masks holding a ring and ribbon. This design marks the new taste found also on contemporary mahogany furniture. Fig. 36 is an arm-chair from the same set; the arms curve outwards, terminating in lions' heads, the uprights are ringed and scaled; the ordinary chair, one of twelve, is shown in fig. 37, and coincides with the others. One of the stools can be seen under the console-table (fig. 20). In the gilding of this furniture the ground is coarsely sanded, producing an extremely soft and unobtrusive effect.

The etiquette of the 'tabouret,' even away from Court, was still preserved, which will account for the great number of stools to be found in large country-houses. In a letter of Mrs. Pendarves to Mrs. Anne Granville in 1727, describing the Lord Mayor's banquet after the coronation, she says :—

'As soon as we had dined the Lady Mayoress got up and we followed her to a very pretty room with a good fire, at the upper end of which was placed two armed chairs, and two stools, for their Majesties and the Princesses.'

A little later we read in the diary of George Bubb Dodington :—

'The Princess sent for me to attend her between 8 and 9 o'clock. I went to Leicester House expecting a small company and a little musick, but found nobody but her Royal Highness. She made me draw a stool and sit by the fireside. Soon after



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came in the Prince of Wales and Prince Edward and then Lady Augusta, all in undress, and took their stools and sate round the fire with us.'

Fig. 38 is an arm-chair, the upper portion of which is entirely different to any of the preceding specimens, and is comparatively modern in its notions of comfort; the back is low, and sufficiently raked to form one long curve with the arms; the seat probably originally possessed a loose cushion. The frame is carved in an ovolo moulding, supported on short scrolled legs, united at the front and sides by heavy garlands of oak-leaves; the chair is reminiscent of Kent, who may have supplied the design, as it bears very distinctly the heavy handiwork of that artist. It is of about the date 1730.



## CHAPTER II



BETWEEN the years 1710 and 1715, mahogany (technically the wood of the *Swietenia mahagoni*, L.) began to be used in this country for the construction of furniture; up to this time it had only been introduced as a veneer or in small portions for decoration, though such things as boxes, or quite small objects, were no doubt occasionally made previous to this date. The raised panels and split balusters applied to the cabinet of about 1660 (fig. 217, 'Age of Oak') are without doubt mahogany, but probably were made from a specimen of the wood brought from abroad as a curiosity. The chairs and settees at Ham House (figs. 186 and 198, 'Age of Walnut') are early examples of mahogany furniture, while their coverings resemble in date those used on the bed that belonged to Queen Anne at Hampton Court; it is therefore reasonable to suppose that the date of the Ham House suite is before 1714. By the year 1720, mahogany was certainly being used for chairs, tables, and settees, and rapidly adopted by those wishing to be fashionable, for at first it was no doubt more expensive than walnut. The figured walnut, reserved for the purposes of veneer, was too rare and too brittle to be used in solid construction when veneered walnut furniture was in fashion, and marqueterie had supplanted carving. Furniture makers quickly discovered properties of lightness in mahogany unknown in oak, and durability and strength deficient in walnut; the warmth of colour was also a novelty. In walnut furniture the mouldings and edgings had been kept plain; cross-banded in veneer, but with the new wood and in the new style as it developed, decorated framings, bandings, and fillets were introduced, and panels of cabinets and wardrobes were carved. Our increasingly great trade and



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possessions in the West Indies encouraged the importation of mahogany, which after 1733 was shipped here in enormous quantities, as in that year Walpole removed the duty off imported timber.

The quality of mahogany varied greatly with the conditions of its growth; exposed situations and solid ground yielding the finest timber. The mahogany generally called 'Spanish,' with 'clouded' grain, was especially prized, and obtained largely, though not exclusively, from San Domingo and Cuba. For many years only the finest and oldest trees lying near the coast were exported, which accounts for the rare excellence of all early mahogany; as these trees were used up, it became necessary to go further inland for this same quality of richly figured wood, transit increased the difficulty of shipment, and so Honduras mahogany began to be exported from the Bay of Campeachy. This variety is more open grained and occasionally much rippled in the figure, yielding logs sometimes over forty feet in length, but of inferior colour. The root of either variety, after attaining a certain size, is deeper in colour and the figure more marked than the wood of the trunk.

Although from 1715 to 1720 comparatively little mahogany furniture was made, it was all of high quality, proving that the wood must have been considered valuable, and used only by the best makers. Walnut was still employed, but as the shapes resembled those of mahogany, it is needless to give many examples of this period. Fig. 39 is an early plain and finely constructed mahogany bureau or *escritoire* of about 1720, resembling in its practical form those made contemporaneously in walnut. A diversion is, however, introduced by the tubbed front to the drawers, fairly simple of execution in solid wood, but not a desirable experiment in veneer; with this exception the piece shows no evolution in form from the lower portion of writing-cabinets of the previous twenty years. The top is kept narrow and the flap is very deep, the front is divided into four drawers, the tubbed and recessed surface entailing a sacrifice of three and a half inches of the wood; the moulding that frames the base, the





FIG. 41.—MAHOGANY WRITING-TABLE. Length, 6 feet 4 inches; width, 3 feet 2 inches; height, 2 feet 7 inches. Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.





FIG. 42.—MAHOGANY DINING-TABLE. Width, 6 feet. Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



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pendants and brackets to the legs, are also similar to those found on Anne specimens. The interior (fig. 40) shows a series of six drawers of serpentine front, surmounted by eight canopied pigeon-holes centring in a door, between two Corinthian columns; within these are two more drawers and many little secret drawers; the brasses on the front are contemporary and very picturesque in form; those on the top drawer are bent over to take the projecting curve. This piece possesses the polish of age attained by long and careful keeping, and is of beautiful colour.

Another *escritoire* or writing-table is fig. 41, not only of great interest from its shape and early date, but from having been the writing-table of Sir Robert Walpole. The upper portion is perfectly plain, and the half-rounded mouldings between the drawers and that surrounding the top carry out this simplicity. The front and back exactly resemble each other, the centre drawers are concave, between others of convex form. The legs are quadrangular, set anglewise and carefully carved; they are united close to the ground by three X-shaped stretchers, moulded in a simple half-round; the handles to the drawers are of mahogany and the keyplates quite simple. The wood has faded to a cinnamon colour, never having been waxed or polished.

Fig. 42 shows Sir Robert Walpole's dining-table, and is also of this early period. The ends are semicircular and on the principle of a gate-table; it is 6 feet wide, and when extended to full length by the introduction of intermediary pieces, is 16 feet 2 inches long. The legs are plain balusters, standing on oblong plinths over knobbed feet, and are thirty-two in number; it is of Cuban mahogany, the same quality used in the decorations and so much of the furniture at Houghton. To the left of the illustration can be seen one of the arched recesses containing one of the marble sideboards with which this side of the room is furnished. These recesses, faced with white marble, are framed between Corinthian columns. The sideboards, one of which is given in fig. 43, are of violet, black, white, and yellow marble; in the centre is a white scallop shell



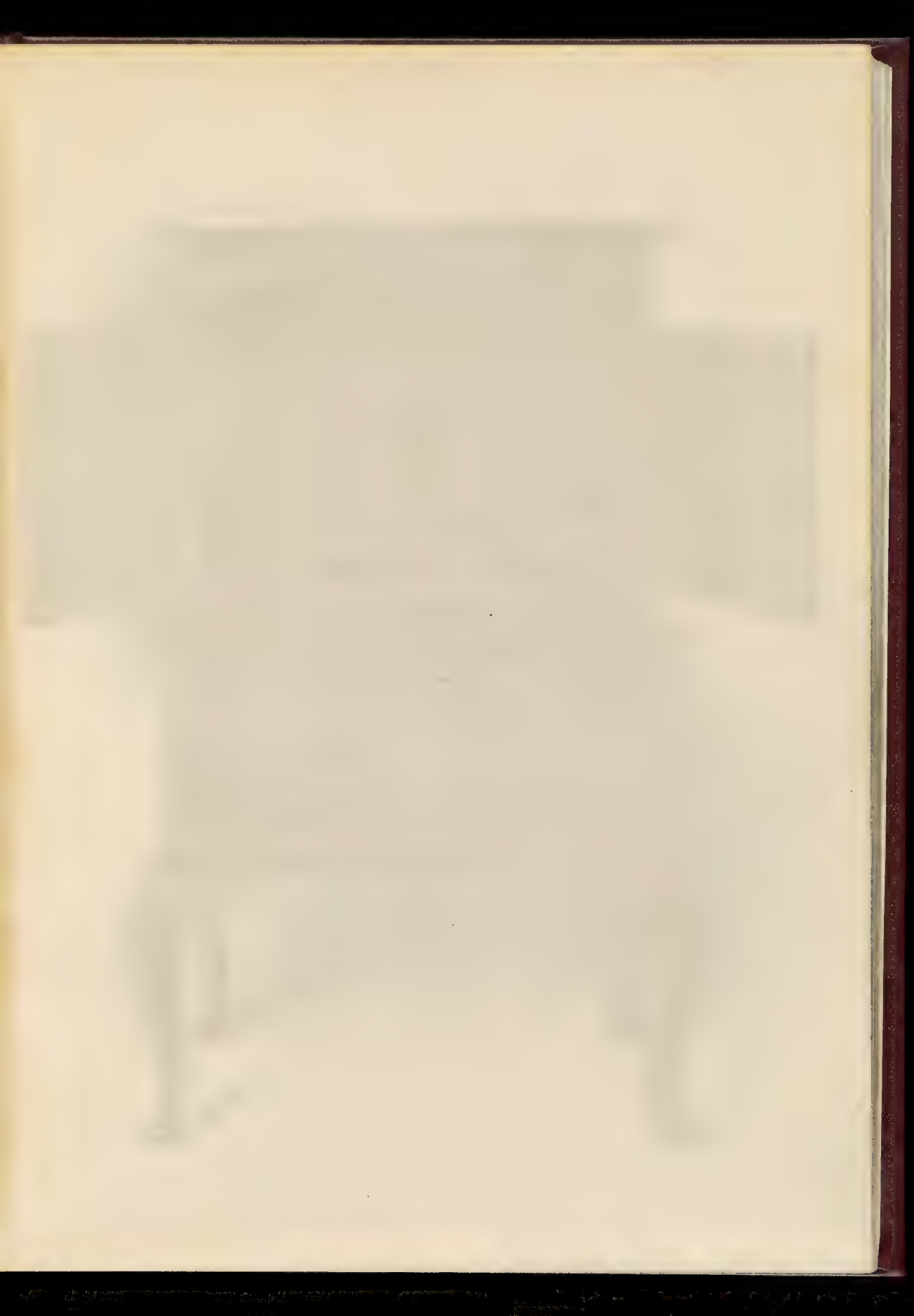




PLATE III (AGE OF MAHOGANY)  
WALNUT CABINET

HEIGHT, 4 FEET 2 INCHES  
LENGTH, 2 " 4 "  
DEPTH, 1 FOOT 4 "

PROPERTY OF  
EDWARD DENT, Esq.











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containing a silver tap, and beneath is a large grey granite cistern. The design of the sideboard conforms to the rest of the architectural surroundings of the room, and is both strong and simple in proportion. In this room the white marble mantelpiece is heavily carved with bunches of grapes, and the overmantel consists of a large panel representing a sacrifice to Bacchus; this structure reaches to the ceiling, which is covered with cupids and grapes in coloured mosaics. The overdoors are carved with a design of grapes in mahogany, partly gilt. The orgies that took place in this room were the talk of all England at that time.

Fig. 44 is a card-table slightly earlier in date, and may even be the table on which the owner of Houghton, in spite of being one of England's most able Prime Ministers, gambled away the two magnificent marble staircases that originally formed the approaches to the back and front of the house, compelling all entrances in future to be made by the insig-



FIG. 43.—MARBLE SIDEBOARD. Length, 7 feet; height, 2 feet 9 inches.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

nificant lower doors. The table possesses a double flap, so that it could be used for cards or chess, the legs are slender and almost straight; the circular corners of the lower flap are dished for the candlesticks and money. Fig. 45 is another of these combination tables, rather more ingenious in construction and circular when open; the front is fitted with shaped drawers, the runners and angles of which are calculated with great care and show the element of good cabinet work which was beginning to make its appearance at this time. The plain shell ornament that overlaps at the junction of the simple, almost straight cabriole legs, and the character of the mahogany, prove the table to be before 1720. The hinges and framing to the movable leg are of oak. It is evident that the early articles of furniture made in mahogany were rather plain in character, but the artist's table (fig. 46) shows some tendency towards decoration. The top is edged with a simple half-round moulding between two fillets, and opens as a flap; underneath this is a series of compartments to hold colours, and a slab that can be raised to form a small easel; at the side are drawers for pencils and brushes. The frame is centred with an Egyptian mask, and lions' faces are introduced on the shoulders of the modelled legs, which finish in claw and ball feet; the brass handles are solid and simple, and carry out the character of the table, which is more interesting than beautiful; the easel, desk, and small compartments for colours infer that it was used in the painting of miniatures or water-colours. Paint-boxes and tubes of colours were unknown during the eighteenth century; the colours were kept in powder or bladders and in the drawers of tables or cabinets, such as the highly finished little cabinet (Plate III.), supposed to have been used by Sir Joshua Reynolds for this purpose. It is of walnut, and of about the date 1710; the cornice and ovolo frieze belonging to the end of the seventeenth century. The doors and inner doors are veneered with oyster-pieces of walnut, with cross-bandings of the same wood bleached; the comparative proportions of the lower and upper portions are unusual, and the stout cabriole legs are calculated to bear the weight



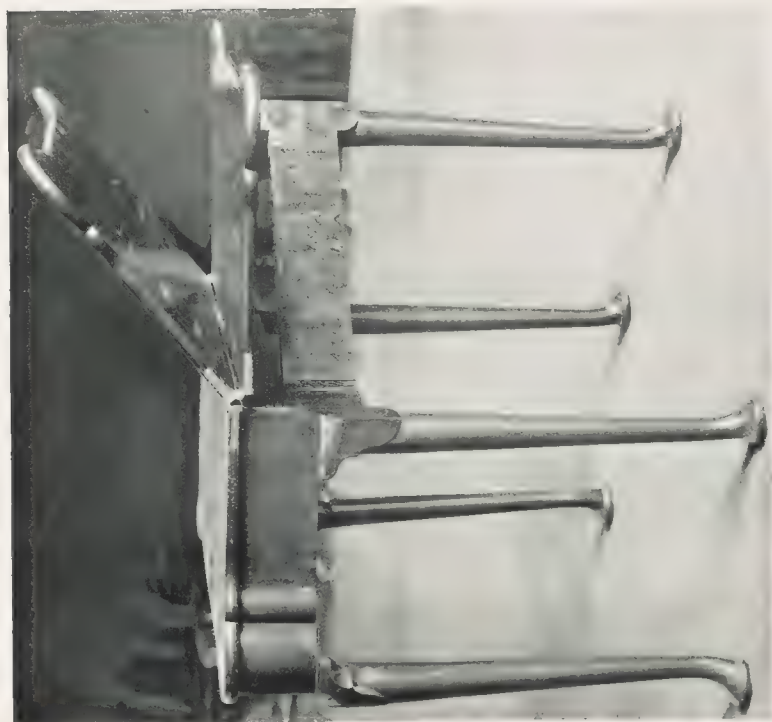


FIG. 44.—MAHOGANY CARD-TABLE.  
Height, 2 feet 4 inches; top, 2 feet 6 inches square.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.

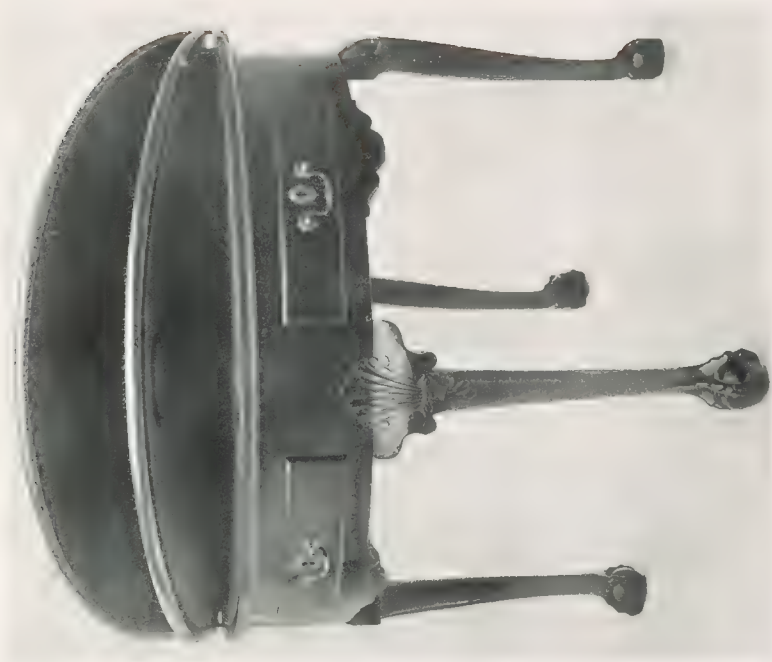


FIG. 45. MAHOGANY CARD-TABLE.  
Height, 2 feet 4 inches; diameter, 2 feet 11 inches.  
Property of PERCY MACQUODEN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

of the cabinet ; the handles and escutcheons are particularly good, but were probably added about 1745. This cabinet, apart from the interest of its ownership, represents a piece of furniture that has always been cared for and kept in beautiful condition, and evidently preferred by Sir Joshua for his personal use at a time when mahogany furniture was universal. The effect of light and air upon the exposed portions of the wood is very clearly seen in the illustration.



FIG. 46.—ARTIST'S TABLE. Mahogany. Height, 2 feet 8 inches ; length, 3 feet 2 inches ; depth, 2 feet. Property of MESSRS. HEWETSON AND MILNER.



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Fig. 47 is an interesting dining-table, octagonal in shape, of a date shortly before 1720, and which can be extended by means of a leaf to a size capable of seating ten persons. The legs are long and graceful, ornamented by simple shells, and terminate in dragon's claw and ball feet, on which it should be noticed that the tendons are prolonged and emphasised. The angle caused by the junction of the legs with the octagon frame is awkward, and these tables were consequently generally constructed with rectangular frames. Fig. 48 is a smaller oak dining-table of about the same date, constructed with a double flap. The legs are slender and headed with shells enclosed within a shield-shaped fillet, the feet are clubbed and ribbed; the arrangement of the centre legs is inconvenient for the sitter, a mistake in construction that occurs on many of these flap-tables.

Oriental taste is clearly perceptible in the mahogany chair (fig. 49), made about 1720, a copy of the style of walnut chair made some twenty years before. The seat is circular and caned, the back semi-circular and composed of four balustered uprights, between which are three oval panels, perforated and carved in the 'Indian Taste,' resting upon a waved rail of the same character; the seat is supported on six cabriole legs ending in lions' feet, united at the sides by scrolled stretchers and at the backs by knobbed stretchers, resembling in arrangement the spokes of a wheel, which no doubt suggested the name wheel-chair; in many instances the seat moves round on a centre pivot. Another name for this shape was 'Burgomaster's chair,' inferring that the pattern came over here from Holland, where taste, owing to important trade with the East, was strongly tinged with Chinese influence. Fig. 50 is the walnut prototype made about 1700, the true period of the shape, and closely resembles the former specimen, but the construction is not so light, nor is the carving of the back so delicate as in the mahogany chair; the acanthus on the legs is elementary yet the proportion of the whole is more pleasing.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

After studying the evolution of form in chairs after 1720, it is very clear that the employment of mahogany suggested possibilities not to be found in oak or walnut, and although certain perforations of the splat took place early in the reign of James II., the great delicacy of treatment in this respect was reserved for later carvers in mahogany. This wood was first used at a plain period of fashion in furniture, but towards 1730 its decoration began and was hurried onwards in every conceivable variation by the various cabinet-makers, of whom Chippendale was perhaps the most consistent. Much mahogany furniture previous to Chippendale has erroneously been ascribed to him or his school, but it must be borne in mind that he was inspired and instructed by at least three waves of distinct taste that immediately preceded his own. The first of these periods was comparatively plain, of which the hooped-back chair (fig. 51), of about 1718, is a fair example. The upper portion is divided into a flat strap of two loops headed by a shell; the vase shape, or so-called fiddle-back splat, is inserted beneath this, and



FIG. 47.—MAHOGANY DINING-TABLE. Property of S. LETTS, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the uprights of the back are pronounced in their angle; the scroll-over of the arms forms another sharp angle, and is of the fashion shortly before 1720; the seat-rail is decorated with a shell, carved in very low relief, and the legs are simple. In fig. 52, the back is of plain Queen Anne type, but the legs and arms are more ornate than in the last chair; the arms turn outwards and end in lions' heads, a fashion introduced soon after 1720; the legs are decorated with a bold shell and pendant terminating in ball and claw feet. The settee (fig. 53) is of the same date, being an early specimen of this form of seat made in mahogany; the double chair-back is perfectly plain, united in the centre by a shell; the broad splat is more for convenience than grace, and the arms turn outwards, finishing in lions' heads; the legs are distinct in character and more graceful than the rest of the piece.

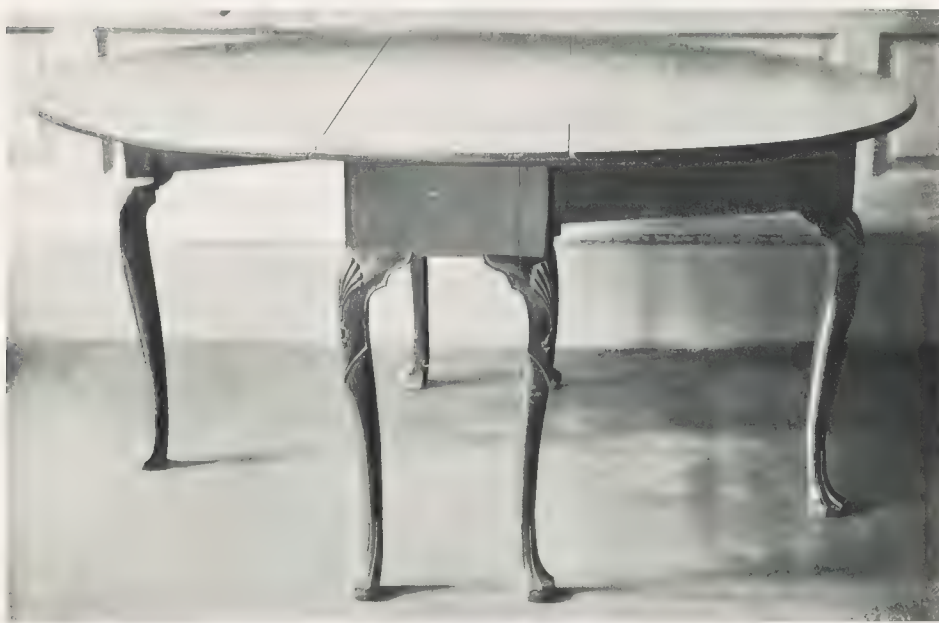


FIG. 48.—OAK DINING-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches; length, 4 feet 7 inches; width, 2 feet 9 inches.  
Property of FRANK GREEN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

A form of triple-back settee began to be made at this time, the greater strength and elasticity obtainable in mahogany enabling the chair-maker to construct the long, delicate rail that formed the top to the three hoops, and so extend the length of the piece of furniture. In the hooped-back chair (fig. 54), rather later in date, the splat begins to show signs of subdivision, the arms turn outward and the legs are simple, but correspond admirably in their curves to the rest of the chair, which, though plain, is lively and graceful in line; the seat is covered with needlework of the time. Fig. 55 is another early mahogany chair, one of a set, and probably of country make; the back is devoid of any beauty, and the perforation of the splat is elementary; the legs, however, possess a certain amount of charm, and are copies of the plain walnut type.

These plain examples may appear somewhat uninteresting and lacking in the grace of later work, but they constitute good types of the first period of mahogany; this and the two succeeding stages were more thoroughly representative of English feeling than the final distinct evolution, which was so strongly tinctured with French and quasi-Chinese design, and christened Chippendale after its chief promoter.

In the china or curiosity cupboard (fig. 56), strong traces of the style of Queen Anne are still visible, though the waved bevel of the lower panels would have caused much difficulty in walnut veneer; the cornice is dentilled, a feature now introduced on cupboards and wardrobes; the doors are divided into twelve lights of serpentine shape, edged by mullions and transoms of elegant baluster form. The lower part opens in two doors, with bevelled panels of the same serpentine design; these rest upon a simple plinth supported on short, ogeed legs; the piece is of solid mahogany throughout, the backing alone being of oak. The interest of this particular cabinet is considerable, as it has been in the possession of the same family ever since it was made; it was sent to America about the year 1723, and known to have been returned here about 1832. Much English mahogany furniture was sent to America during the eighteenth



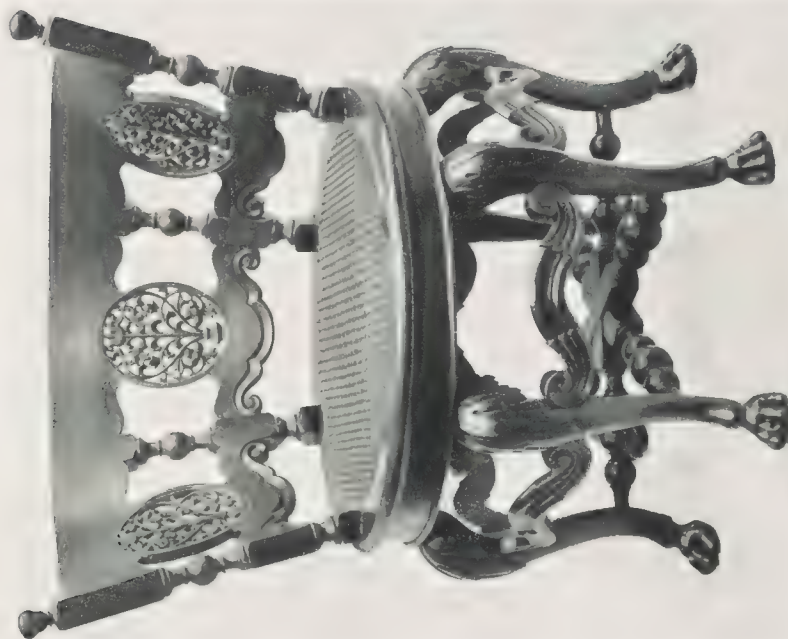


FIG. 49.—MAHOGANY WHEEL-CHAIR.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.



FIG. 50.—WALNUT WHEEL-CHAIR.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.





FIG. 51.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 4 inches.  
Property of J. MALLETT, Esq.



FIG. 52.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 3 inches.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.



FIG. 53.—MAHOGANY SETTEE. Height, 3 feet 3 inches; length, 4 feet 6 inches  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

century, very beautiful specimens being still in existence there; these served as models to our colonists, and an independent school was evolved in that country and flourished, particularly at Newport, during the latter half of the century.

Fig. 57 is a chair of about 1725, which, though made in walnut, is representative of the second and more decorated period of mahogany. The plain splat and hooped back preserve the characteristics of earlier chairs, whilst the legs are ornamented with the favourite lion attributes. The designers at this time appear to have arrived at a decision how to treat the legs of chairs, but the backs and divisions of the splats evidently still



FIG. 54.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR.  
Property of J. MALLET, Esq.



FIG. 55.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Property of HENRY HUXLEY, Esq.



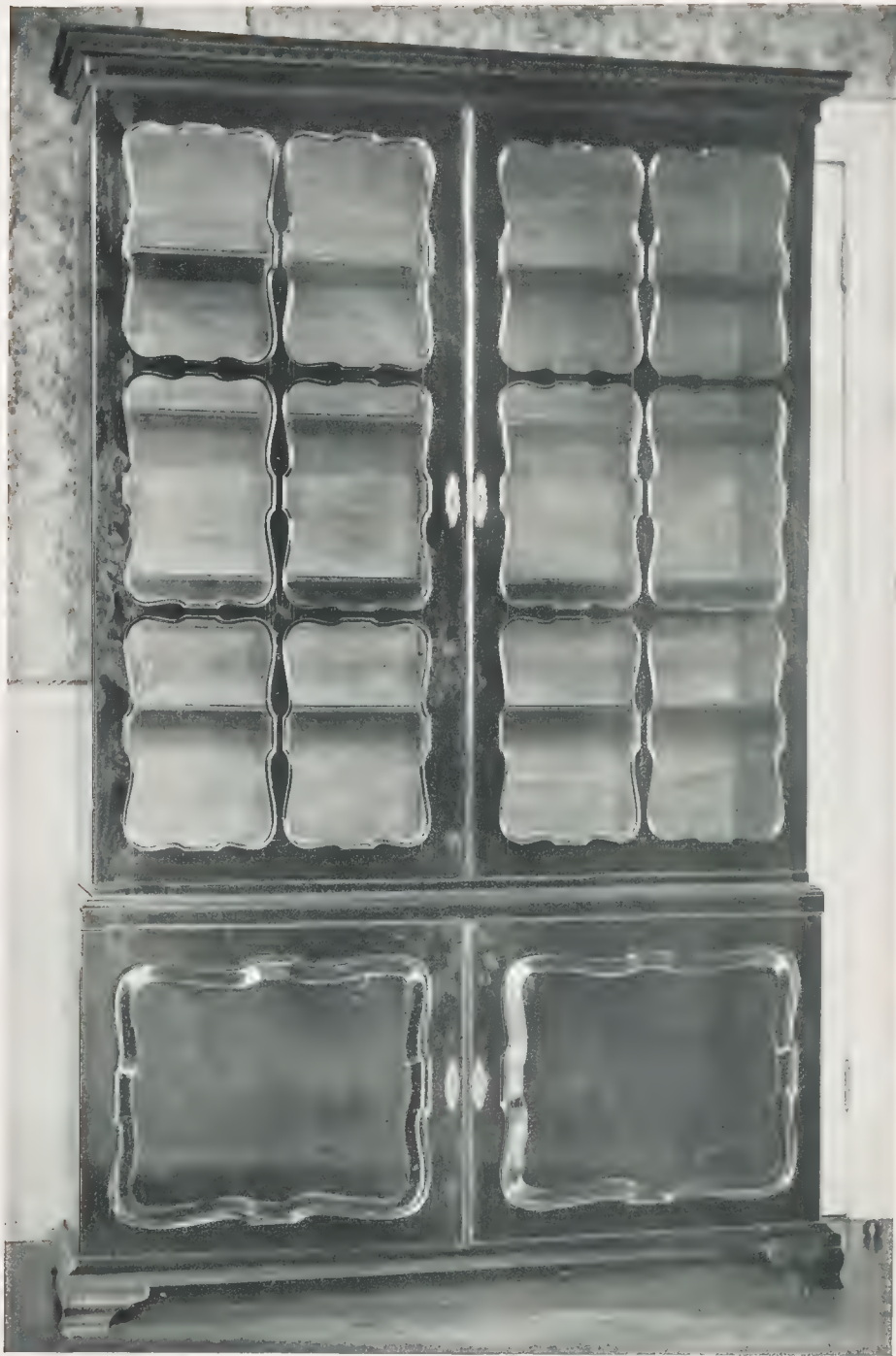


FIG. 56.—MAHOGANY CHINA-CUPBOARD. Height, 7 feet 7 inches; width, 4 feet 6 inches; depth, 1 foot 1 inch. Property of W. A. MEREDITH, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

presented difficulties. Broad shoulders to cabriole legs, and shells with pendants, lingered in fashion for a long period, but after 1730 gradually disappeared. In the exceptionally fine settee (fig. 58) made towards the end of George I.'s reign, full advantage is taken of the solid mahogany splats, and they are elaborately carved in the solid with a delicate tracery of distinctly foreign influence. A satyr's mask in full relief, placed low in order to avoid discomfort to the sitter, is a prominent feature; the hooped top is much depressed, assuming the form adopted on chairs after 1730, and where it meets the splat the surface is concave, giving both grace and lightness; the arms turn outwards and finish in lions' heads; the satyr mask is repeated on the legs, which end in ball and claw feet; the seat is covered with the original needlework, and completes a very perfect specimen of the second and decorated period of mahogany.

The constant changes in design occurring at this time in different parts of chairs, infer that taste was now in a very unsettled state, which renders the precise chronological arrangement of this transitional period most difficult. The chair (fig. 59) shows the hoop-shaped back still in existence, but its uprights form a continuous line with the legs, and the stepped curve immediately above the seat, so marked a feature for the last twenty years, has disappeared. Occasionally, no doubt, individuals asserted their own taste, and insisted on certain details in their furniture being adapted on pieces of later fashion, and so created confusion of period; but such distinct points as the omission of the step in the uprights of chairs, or the division of their splats, clearly define a distinct and important change. The splat in this example is divided into three longitudinal openings, the rest of the chair presenting no new



FIG. 59.—WALNUT CHAIR  
Height, 3 feet 4 inches.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

feature except the decoration of the seat-rail, which is carved with the wave pattern found on so many of the gilt console-tables of George I.; the masks on the legs are those of lions holding a ring and pendant. This same wave pattern is found again on the serpentine seat-rail of the stool (fig. 60), but the carving on the legs is more delicate and the curves more graceful than is generally the case on these stools, and the feet are ribbed in the manner of those of the table (fig. 48), which infers a date soon after 1720. Another stool (fig. 61) belonging to this same period is remarkable in representing a lion's front and hind legs; no masks are introduced on the latter, but the modelling of the hocks is very clearly



FIG. 58.—MAHOGANY SETTEE. Length, 4 feet 6 inches; height, 3 feet 4 inches.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLET AND SON.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

shown. This particular treatment can be observed in the discoveries of furniture fabricated in Egypt and Assyria four thousand years ago.

In the two smaller stools (fig. 62) lions' masks are repeated on all the legs; these pieces of furniture have been re-upholstered, and much of their proportion lost in the process. Our ancestors considered the coverings and trimmings of furniture as important as its manufacture, and in descriptions of individual pieces the coverings are more frequently mentioned than the carving. Every variety of covering was used at this time, and the materials employed represented a good deal of expenditure in both time and money. Chintz was used, and sometimes even linen elaborately embroidered, to protect the highly prized velvets, damasks, and needlework. In 1757, Mrs. Delany, one of the most celebrated needlewomen of the eighteenth century, wrote as follows to her friend Mrs. Dewes :—

'I am glad you are going to work covers to your chairs. I think you must alter your pattern, for they will have more wearing and washing than the bed or the curtains. I fear your cloth-work will not be firm enough. The border will be too broad for the chairs, something of the same kind of border to the bed with the mosaic pattern in the middle, and instead of cloth fill up part of it with stitches in thread, but don't you want your coverlid first?'

Although cheap materials were manufactured in those days, they were seldom employed upon good furniture. Leather was largely used of all colours, even black. In the private accounts of John Hervey, Earl of Bristol, it is mentioned that he paid 'Tho. Phill, upholsterer, in full for ye Turkey leather chairs, £30, 2s. 6d.,' and in 1726, 'Paid to John Sebthorpe for ten black leather chairs, £12, 3s., bought at Brigadier Munder's auction of goods.' Turkey leather was another name for morocco. It is interesting to see that so rich and



FIG. 59.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 3 inches.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.





FIG. 60.—MAHOGANY STOOL. Length, 1 foot 6 inches; height, 1 foot 5 inches.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.



FIG. 61.—MAHOGANY STOOL. Length, 1 foot 8 inches; height, 1 foot 5 inches.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.







PLATE IV (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

MAHOGANY SOFA

■ LENGTH, 6 FEET 4 INCHES

HEIGHT, 3 " 2 "

DEPTH, 3 "

PROPERTY OF

FRANK PARTRIDGE, Esq.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

important a peer as the Earl of Bristol not only bought furniture at auction, but also from personal acquaintances, as in 1702 there is an entry in his diary, 'Paid Colonel Parsons for ye black bureau, £6,' and another in 1714, 'Paid Sir Harry Bond in full for a Japan cabinet, £35.' In all these prices it must be remembered that the value of money at that time was about three times greater than it is to-day.

Fig. 63 is a sofa of about 1725 to 1730; the back appears unusually high, as in the recent upholstering the loose squab has been omitted which would have completed the proper proportions of the piece. The arms are straight and padded and finish in lions' heads, the same design being repeated on the legs.

Up to this time mahogany had of necessity been used with caution, but the great amount imported by Walpole for the decoration of Houghton, and the removal of the tax on imported timber, no doubt suggested a more lavish use of the wood. In the sofa (Plate IV.) a carved cresting is introduced, the arms are faced with mahogany, terminating in lions' heads; the front rail is elaborated with drooping pendants, the style of the carving being typical of the work done



FIG. 62.—SMALL MAHOGANY STOOLS. Height, 1 foot 4 inches.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

about 1730 ; the legs have the usual lions' masks and paws ; the covering is a modern reproduction of a silk of the time. A suite, elaborately carved, of settees, chairs, and stools of fantastic design, and also of about this same date, exist at Houghton. The settee (fig. 64) is one of a pair ; the cresting is high and solid, carved with graceful wreaths of acanthus on a scaled ground left in the natural colour of the wood ; the arms are treated in a similar manner, and resemble in their downward scroll those of the end of the seventeenth century ; the legs are surmounted with classical heads, and terminate in scrolled feet of the same date, and connecting these is a deep, openly carved design of acanthus scrolls centring in a large shell. The whole of the raised ornament is gilt, the plain surfaces being left in the mahogany ; the seat and back are covered with a crimson and rose-coloured figured velvet of Spitalfields make, and the whole effect is very



FIG. 63.—MAHOGANY SOFA. Length, 5 feet ; height, 3 feet 8 inches.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

remarkable. Fig. 65 is one of the twelve arm-chairs that accompany these settees; the cresting is of the same character, and the uprights are carved with a ringed band terminating in husks, the scroll of the corners turning slightly outwards; the carved heads and shells are repeated on the legs, feet, and pendant. Fig. 66 is one of the stools or tabourets, which are six in number, also belonging to this suite; this illustration is

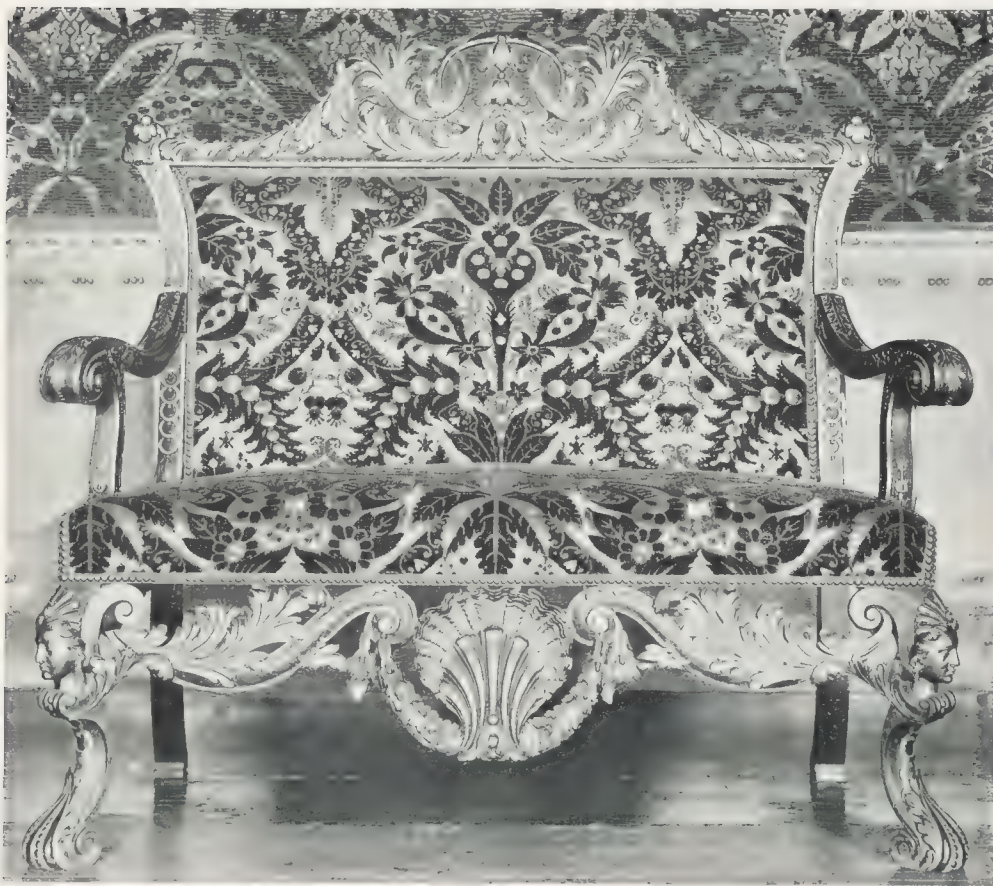


FIG. 64.—MAHOGANY AND GILT SETTEE. Length, 4 feet; height, 4 feet 1 inch.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.





FIG. 65.—MAHOGANY AND GILT ARM-CHAIR. Height, 4 feet ; width of seat, 2 feet.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

given in extra scale to show the details of the carving and gilding. The design of this set of furniture is extravagant, and suggests an elaborate effort of Kent in conjunction with the Italian carvers known to have been employed at Houghton at that time; the result carries on no evolution in mahogany furniture, for the details are composed of a medley of preceding styles, and the attempt at originality is quite abortive. Belonging to this same suite, but more beautiful, are the two high pedestals (fig. 67) in the form of terms, carved and partly gilt; they are headed by the bust of a child bearing the capital of a column, composite in order; the terminals



FIG. 66.—MAHOGANY AND GILT STOOL. Length, 2 feet; breadth, 1 foot 10 inches; height, 1 foot 9 inches. Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.





FIG. 67.—MAHOGANY AND GILT PEDESTALS. Height, 5 feet  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

are scrolled in form, garlanded with fruit, and decorated from the feet upwards with one long acanthus leaf on a scaled ground; the carving of the capitals and the children's heads is excellent, and the conjunction of the mahogany and gold in this instance most effective; the plinths are plain and square, with a rosette band. Fig. 68 is another pedestal, one of a pair; the carving is coarse and the design disconnected; it is interesting, however, as forming part of a suite of fine mahogany and gilt furniture at Longford Castle, that is contemporary with the specimens at Houghton, but altogether superior in style. This set of sofas, chairs, and stools is very representative of the end of the second period in mahogany, about 1730. In the day-bed or couch (fig. 69), which is of extreme length, the ends scroll over and are bordered like the frame in a fretted pattern, enclosed within fine bead and reel mouldings. The original green damask with which the couch and cushions are covered is strained underneath this gilt fretwork; it would therefore be impossible to re-upholster this furniture without removing the fretwork and the mouldings. The cushions are six in number and gradate in size, a fashion that had existed on day-beds since the sixteenth century; the frame is supported on eight legs, graceful for their height, carved with shells and acanthus, and finishing in lions' paws; these are connected by long scrolls of acanthus centring in shells. The carving, with the exception of the feet, is gilt, the remainder of the wood being left in the plain mahogany. Fig. 70 is a stool, five feet in length, and one of a pair; it is supported on six legs, and corresponds in design to the day-bed. The smaller stool (fig. 71) is one of four.



FIG. 68.—MAHOGANY AND GILT PEDESTAL.  
Height, 4 feet 6 inches.  
Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.



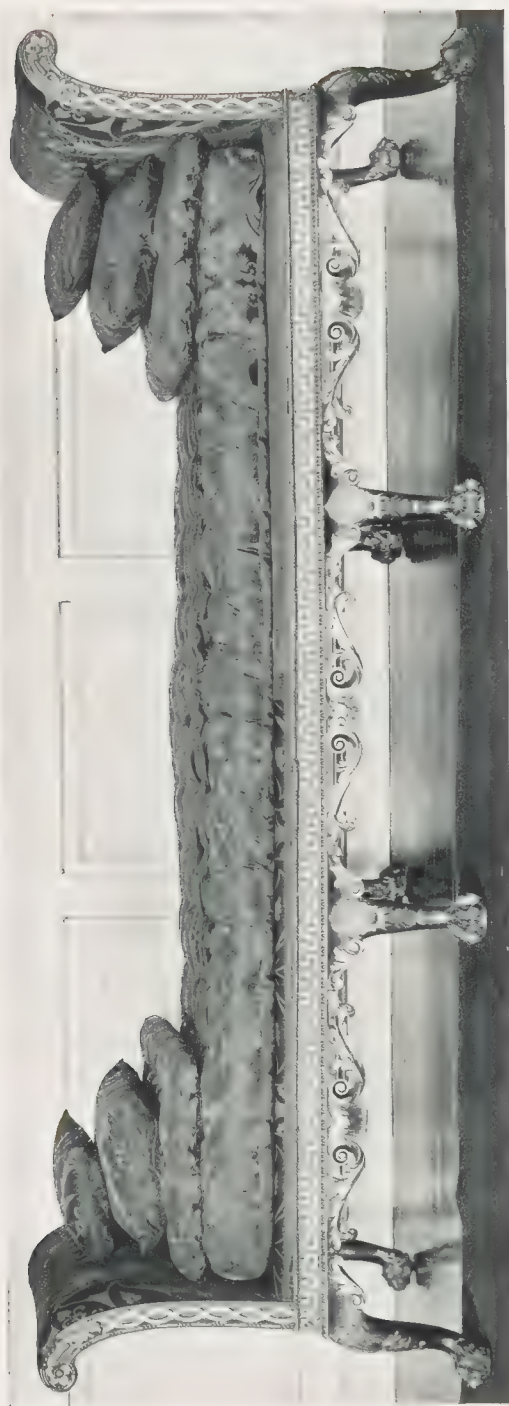


FIG. 69.—MAHOGANY AND GILT DAY-BED. Length, 7 feet; width, 2 feet 10 inches. Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.

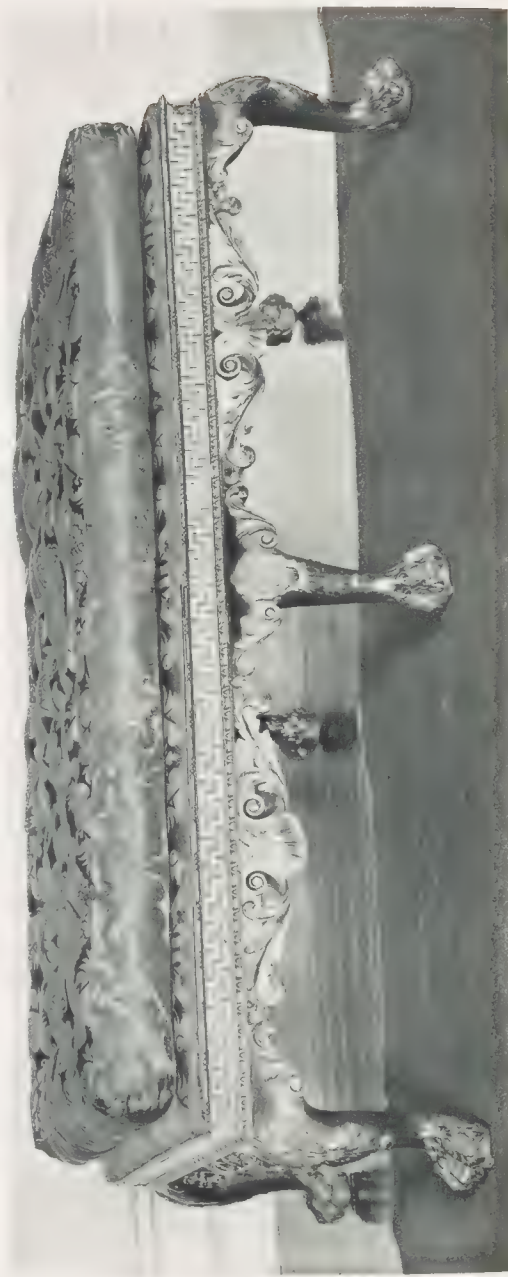


FIG. 70.—MAHOGANY AND GILT LONG DOUBLE STOOL. Height, 1 foot 9 inches; length, 5 feet; width, 2 feet 4 inches. Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

It is rare to find stools of this description with their original squabs as in these examples. The effect of the mahogany enriched with its old gilding, in conjunction with the greengage coloured damask, is very beautiful, but undoubtedly this quality of furniture was not often made, as its demand was confined only to the very rich. The arm-chair, one of a pair (fig. 72), also from Longford Castle, in some way resembles the day-bed and stools, and was probably made about the same time. The previous hoop form to the backs of chairs had now given way to corners of square shape, a fashion that was adopted for many years; the carving of the top rail forms a cresting that finishes in inverted eagles' heads; the frame of the chair and the arm supports are a fretted banding of guilloche pattern gilt, through which the emerald green Italian velvet covering is visible; the arms are straight and upholstered, ending in lions' heads; the carving on the legs shows a distinct departure from any previous decoration of



FIG. 71.—MAHOGANY AND GILT STOOL. Height, 1 foot 9 inches; length, 2 feet 10 inches; width, 2 feet. Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

this kind, being far more delicate and open in treatment ; the cabriole form of the legs is still sturdy ; the carved portions, with the exception of the lions' heads, are gilt.

Mahogany side-tables or sideboards with marble or wooden tops for dining-rooms were made contemporaneously with the gilt consoles already described, but probably not before 1720. Fig. 73 is an early table of this kind with its original mahogany top ; the severe but admirable proportion of the frame and the slight legs are not calculated for a thick marble slab ; the open character of the acanthus on the front, the isolation and peculiarity of feature on the lion's mask are typical of an early date.



FIG. 72.—MAHOGANY AND GILT ARM-CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 8 inches. Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.

Fig. 74 is a sideboard of Irish origin with its old mahogany top. Here the treatment is more barbaric ; the face and acanthus decoration show a less practised hand, but the legs at their junction with the frame are ingenious and original in treatment, producing a graceful and slender sense of line ; the feet are curious in their conventionality, a series of balls representing the joints of the paws. Fig. 75 is another Irish sideboard, even more marked in character. The frame is plain, the lower portion being bordered with a carving of rough criss-cross divided with two well-carved scallop shells ; a large barbaric lion's mask forms the centre, from which swags of oak leaves and acorns stretch



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

to the rather delicate cabriole legs, which are shouldered with acanthus and terminate in many-jointed lions' paws. The top is original. No doubt the difficulty of transit of marble slabs encouraged the use of wooden tops to these Irish tables, which are most frequently found constructed in this manner. In these last two tables, which are between the years 1725 and 1730, the colour of the mahogany has attained a deep rich tone, and the surface resembles that of bronze. The furniture, decorations, and silver plate of Irish workmanship of this time show great refinement of taste and perception of proportion; individual touch is especially noticeable in the plate, which is solid and of high quality, and the use of the little lion's mask on the cabriole leg ending in lions' paws, found so frequently on small jugs, sugar-basins, and stands of the time, was practically confined to that country. The description in the following letter of Mrs. Clayton's apartments, when resident with the Court, shows the standard of decoration at Dublin at that period. The letter is from Mrs. Pendarves to a friend:—

‘DUBLIN, 1731.

‘. . . You must know, madam, yesterday being Wednesday, Mrs. Clayton opened her apartment and admitted all her acquaintance. I will describe to you how they are all disposed and furnished. First there is a very good hall well filled with servants, then a room of eighteen feet square, wainscoated with oak, the panels all carved and the doors and chimney finished with very fine high carving, the ceiling stucco, the window curtains and chairs yellow Genoa damask, portraits and landscapes very well done, round the room marble tables between the windows, and looking-glasses with gilt frames. The next room is twenty-eight feet long and twenty-two broad, and is as finely adorned as damask, pictures, and busts can make it, besides the floor being entirely covered with the finest Persian carpet that ever was seen. The bed-chamber is large and handsome, all furnished with the same damask.’

In another letter written by this same lady a little later, she describes her own apartments in England as follows:—

‘Yesterday morning my upholsterer came and my new apartment will be very handsome.’ The drawing-room hung with tapestry, on each side of the door a Japan chest, the curtains and chairs crimson mohair, between the window large glasses with gilt frames and marble tables under them; the bed-chamber within hung with crimson damask; bed, chairs, and curtains the same.’





FIG. 73.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 5 feet; height, 2 feet 7 inches.



FIG. 74.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 5 feet; height, 2 feet 8 inches.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.





FIG. 75.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 4 feet 11 inches; width, 2 feet 4 inches; height, 2 feet 8 inches. Property of J. ANNAN BRYCE, Esq.



FIG. 76.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 5 feet 2 inches; height, 2 feet 9 inches. Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

It seems curious that mohair should have been used in the drawing-room and damask in the bedroom. In a description written about 1720, by Macky, of the Palace of Wanstead, built by Sir Richard Childe, the same characteristics of furnishing are mentioned :—

‘The apartment on the right fronting the area, called my Lord’s apartment, consists of a parlour furnished with French prints, marble tables ; an anti-chamber furnished with gold and blue brocade, velvet brocaded chairs and marble tables. A bed-chamber of crimson damask. The apartment on the right, called my Lady’s, consists of a parlour finely adorned with China paper, the figures of men, women, birds and flowers the liveliest I ever saw come from that country ; the anti-chamber is furnished with China silk, stained in colours, incomparably fine ; the bed-chamber and dressing-room all also of China silk.’

By the middle of the century English wall-papers had arrived at great



FIG. 77.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 4 feet 10 inches ; width, 2 feet 2 inches ; height, 3 feet. Property of the DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

perfection in their manufacture, but were evidently expensive, as Lady Hertford states in a letter written to the Countess of Pomfret in 1741, that at a paper warehouse she was shown papers at twelve shillings and thirteen shillings a yard, also some at four shillings, but contented herself with one at elevenpence a yard.

In the table (fig. 76), of about 1725 to 1730, the top is marble and the frame is plain but for a narrow bead and reel moulding; the legs are extremely bold; lion-headed, hocked and feathered like those of the chair (fig. 34). In the centre is a deep pendant, but here unconnected with the legs; the numerous little scrolls of carving with which this pendant is embellished produces a somewhat restless effect, and the swag of drapery surrounding the female mask is not in scale with the rest of the table. The surface and colour of the wood in most of these sideboard-tables is remarkable; for the mahogany was of picked quality and probably in the first instance lightly covered with fiddle varnish or wax, which after a hundred and fifty years of rubbing has been cut down to the wood; at any



FIG. 78.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 5 feet 2 inches; height, 2 feet 8 inches.  
Property of D. L. ISAACS, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

rate, all gums or wax originally employed have disappeared, and only the bronze-like surface of the wood is left.

Fig. 77 is a specimen from Blenheim, one of a pair about the date 1730, with a mahogany top and projecting corners. The front and legs closely resemble in design some of the gilt tables already illustrated, but the heavy scrolling in the dark wood on this specimen overwhelms the lighter decoration to the front rail; it is unusual to find legs exactly of this type on mahogany furniture.

Plate v. is a sideboard-table about the date 1735, of fine design, made of light wood stained to resemble mahogany, and with a scagliola top; a cheaper imitation of the more expensive article made in mahogany and marble. The softer quality of the light wood lent itself to great freedom and richness in the carving, but this make of table is rare to find of such excellence, as the fine craftsman usually preferred to represent his work in more durable material. This staining of woods was very popular for a time, and the following extract on the subject in a letter to the *Annual Register* for 1764 is interesting:

‘As I am very fond of mahogany furniture, I immediately (on reading a paper relating to a method of imitating it) entered on some experiments for that purpose.

‘I took two pieces, one of elm and another of plane, both of which I stained well with aqua-fortis. I then took two drachms of powdered dragon’s blood, one drachm of powdered alkanet root, and half a drachm of aloes, from all of which I extracted a tincture, with half a pint of spirits of wine; this tincture I laid over the wood with a sponge, and it gave it the colour of a piece of fine old mahogany. But may not wood be more uniformly and durably coloured while growing, since the bones of animals, as I myself have seen, are successfully coloured by feeding them on madder roots? The anhelant tubes by which trees suck their nourishment from the earth are analogous to the mouths of animals, and the circulating vessels of the former are much larger than in the bones of the latter.’

In fig. 78, the perfection of execution and style in these tables is reached, and it is a good representation of the third period of mahogany from about 1730 to 1735, and that which most directly influenced Chippendale and his fellow-workers. The front consists of a carved frieze of finely scrolled acanthus, centring in a mask pendant, the lower rail of







PLATE V (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

STAINED WOOD TABLE WITH SCAGLIOLA TOP

LENGTH, 3 FEET 9 INCHES

HEIGHT, 2 " 7 "

DEPTH, 2 "

PROPERTY OF

C. J. CHARLES, Esq.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the frame being deeply and boldly gadrooned ; the ornament on the legs resembles that on the day-bed at Longford (fig. 69), but rings are introduced above the ball and claw feet. The top of this table was originally marble, but has been replaced by one of mahogany. As a substitute for marble tops to these tables, scagliola, an imitation of marble, was often used ; these tops in many instances have cracked and been replaced by wood. Horace Walpole, in a letter of 1749, says, 'The scagliola tables have arrived.' This manufacture was invented in Italy as a cheaper substitute for marble at the end of the sixteenth century, and was introduced here for furniture and decoration about 1735. It was a composition of calcined gypsum, mixed with isinglass and Flanders glue ; when in this state it was coloured to imitate the different varieties of marble, and laid on like cement ; after hardening it was capable of very high polish. Another way of imitating costly marbles was by staining ordinary white marble according to the methods invented by Kircher and Mr. Bird in the seventeenth century, and given at length in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the time. Kircher's method was to colour the marble

'By vitriol, bitumen, etc., forming a design of what you like upon paper, and laying the design between two pieces of polished marble ; then closing all the interstices with wax, you bury them for a month or two in a damp place. On taking them up, you will find that the design you painted on paper has penetrated the marbles, and formed exactly the same design on them.'

Emanuel da Costa, F.R.S., writing in 1759, says this method was recommended then, and in the same article he gives an interesting account of marbles stained by a Mr. Robert Chambers about that time, and the tests to which they were subjected. He says :—

'A piece of marble with several colours used on it, like a painter's pallet, being greatly saturated with aqua-fortis at different times for twenty hours, though the polish of the marble was quite effaced, yet there was not the least discharge of any of the colours, nor were they anywise dulled.'



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

He goes on to say that the results of the tests proved :—

‘That the colour permanently penetrated the marble without injuring it; it is therefore probable that Mr. Chambers’ method of staining or colouring marbles is extremely good.’

Card-tables with the lion decoration were in fashion between 1720 and 1730, in both mahogany and walnut. Fig. 79 is a very highly finished specimen of about the latter date in mahogany from Penshurst; the legs are headed with lions’ masks and long sprays of acanthus, they are hocked and covered with curious representations of little tufts of hair, and terminate in paws. The top (fig. 80) is covered with an elaborate mythological scene in fine needlework of the time, and bordered round



FIG. 79.—MAHOGANY CARD-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 3 inches; width, when open, 2 feet 6 inches.  
Property of LORD DE LISLE AND DUDLEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

all the edges with a narrow silver galon ; the corners of the table are dished for candles and receptacles for money and counters, the outer edges being carved. Fig. 81, a walnut specimen of about 1725, is also of the lion-headed pattern ; the lower edge to the frame is serpentine. Card-playing, like all other forms of speculation, was much on the increase during the reign of George 1., and this infatuation, which had hitherto been confined to the rich and those more or less connected with the Court, gradually permeated all classes of society. George II. and his



FIG. 80.—TOP OF SAME. Property of LORD DE LISLE AND DUDLEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

Queen set the example of card-playing every evening with very high stakes, and it is stated that no one was supposed to take a place at the royal card parties with a less sum than £200.

The Countess of Hartford, in a letter dated 1741, remarks that :—

‘Assemblies are now so much in fashion that most persons fancy themselves under a necessity of inviting all their acquaintances three or four times to their houses, not in small parties, which would be supportable, but they are all to come at once, nor is it enough to engage married people, but the boys and girls sit down as gravely at whist tables as fellows of colleges used to formerly ; it is actually a ridiculous, though I think a mortifying sight, that play should become the business of the nation from the age of fifteen to fourscore.’

Dearth of intellectual amusement no doubt contributed to this love of gambling, which was carried to an even greater and more dangerous extent as the century advanced ; the well-known picture by Hogarth of ‘The Lady’s last Stake,’ painted in 1759, being figurative of the evils that were attendant on this mania.



FIG. 81.—WALNUT CARD-TABLE.  
Height, 2 feet 4 ; width, when open, 2 feet 6 inches.



### CHAPTER III



COMPARATIVELY little alteration took place in the decoration of important beds during the first thirty years of the eighteenth century, and that they were regarded as valuable items of household furniture is proved by the elaborate specimens that continued to be made, and the care that was taken in connection with their use. Even in the letting of a furnished house, the beds were evidently on occasions charged for as extras; the following letter from Sir Godfrey Kneller to Pope on this subject is interesting :—

‘GREAT QUEEN STREET, 16th June 1719.

‘SIR,

‘I am in towne, and have louck’d for beds and bedsteads, which must cost ten pounds a year. When I promised to provide them you had maid no mention of the towne rates, which I am to pay, and will be £5 a year at least, and which would be £15 per annum with the beds; and that house did let for 45 a year when I bought it, so that all I have laid out being near 400 pound, would be done for nothing, of which you will consider and let me know your mind. The stables are fitted as you gentlemen ordered them to be, and all the painting will be done to-morrow or Thursday, with whenscoating in the quickest manner and best; and if you can stay till Saturday (the rooms shall be aired), and pray let me know your pleasure about the beds and bedsteads, for them I cannot provide. You may have 6, of which two are to have courtains for 10 pounds a year, etc.’

It is rare to find a bed of any period in an absolutely untouched condition, for not only was the upholstery liable to easy destruction, but the taste of successive owners often caused alterations. The two state-beds at Houghton are therefore of great interest, being now, exactly as they were originally made and in beautiful condition. The earlier is fig. 82, which from its great height of fourteen feet necessitates division in the illustration. The tester, back, curtains, valances, and quilt are





FIG. 82.—EMBROIDERED STATE-BED. Height, 14 feet; width, 6 feet; length, 7 feet.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



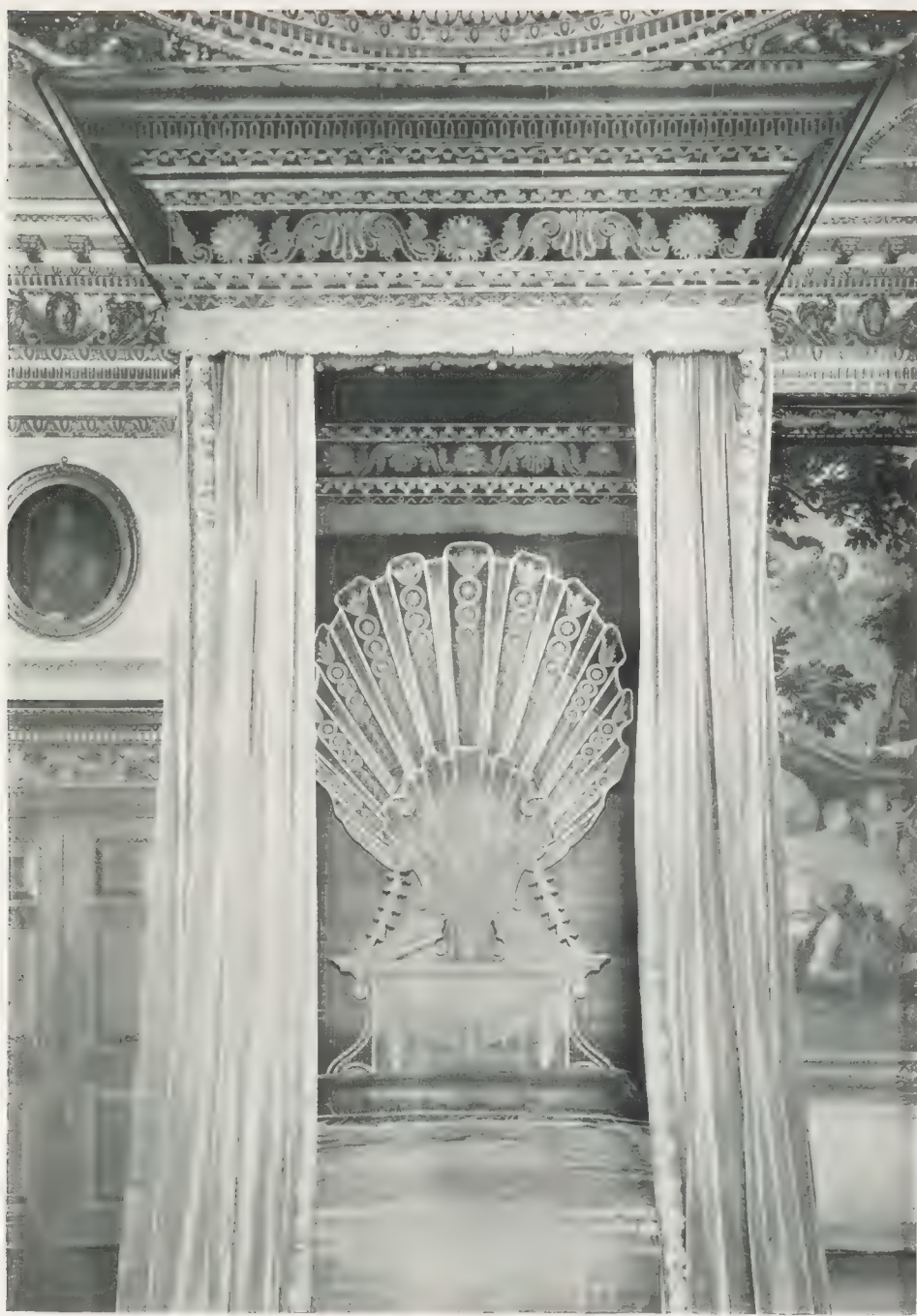


FIG. 83.—VELVET STATE-BED. Height, 15 feet ; length, 7 feet 6 inches ; width, 6 feet 6 inches.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

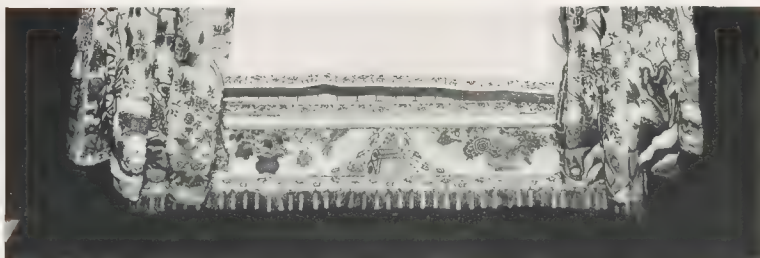


FIG. 82 A.—LOWER PORTION OF BED.

composed of very fine Indian embroidery on a linen ground which is backstitched all over in fine thread ; the cornice to the tester is of carved wood on which the embroidery is strained ; at the four corners are carved escutcheons with the arms of Sir Robert Walpole in English needlework ; the back is a tall scrolled design carved in wood and covered with the embroidered linen, and containing an elaborate representation of the arms, also in English needlework of the period. The basses are of the Indian work, the stitch of all being so fine that at a little distance the material might be mistaken for chintz. Horace Walpole, in his *Ædis Walpolianæ*, published in 1743, in describing the Embroidered Bedchamber, says :—

‘The Bed is of the finest Indian needlework ; His Royal Highness Francis, Duke of Lorrain, afterwards Grand Duke of Tuscany, and since Emperor, lay in this bed when he came to visit Sir Robert at Houghton.’

This visit took place in 1733, a very few years later than the date of the bed.

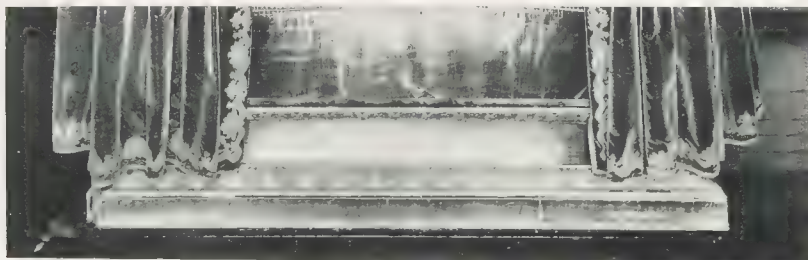


FIG. 83 A.—LOWER PORTION OF BED.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

The example fig. 83 is the other state-bed preserved at Houghton, and a few years later in date. The tester consists of a series of simple mouldings, covered with green jaspé velvet, richly embroidered and fringed with gold ; from this fall the curtains, each being six feet in width, of the same velvet, trimmed with gold embroidery and fringed with gold, and lined with cream-coloured silk ; the ceiling of the tester is embroidered and fringed in the same elaborate manner. The back of the bed is of the green velvet, on which is a large escallop shell springing from a broken pediment, all carved in wood, and covered with velvet ornamented with gold ; the quilt is composed of the same fabrics ; the bed is mounted on a wooden plinth, covered to match the hangings. The ornaments and decorations of this state-bed are known to have been designed by Kent. To the right of the illustration can be seen a piece of the Gobelin tapestries with which the room is hung, representing the loves of Venus and Adonis, and to the left one of the mahogany doors alluded to before, with its richly carved and gilt frieze.

About 1715, bedposts once more began to be carved, and soon after that date were freely made in mahogany. Fig. 84 is one of a pair, formed of delicately fluted columns on vase-shaped bases ornamented with acanthus ; the leg is headed with a design found on chairs early in George II.'s reign, an escutcheon centring in a cabochon ornament surrounded by acanthus ; the foot is a lion's paw of fine execution. Posts and feet of this character can be seen again on the bed (fig. 85), which is a simple specimen of about 1735. The cornice is boldly carved in a scroll-work of the mahogany, rising at the corners and centres into



FIG. 84.—MAHOGANY BEDPOST.  
Property of T. CHARBONNIER, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

trefoil shape; there is no frieze, but the double valances are of unusual depth, the cantonnières being pronounced in form and finished on either side with tassels; the back is plainly plaited in the same material as the rest of the upholstery, which is a fine cherry-red mohair; the front curtains are missing, so the exceptionally good bedposts can be well seen; the ceiling of the tester is slightly dome-shaped, covered in the mohair, with corners and mouldings of mahogany. Fig. 86 is a more important bed, and perhaps a little later in date; the lines of the cornice, carved in mahogany and gilt, are of undulating form and of fantastic shape, the trefoil motives of the centres and corners resembling those of the former example; the valance follows the lines of the cornice, and is of rose-red damask trimmed with contemporary fringe. The damask of the upholstery is earlier in design than the bed, and probably formed part of the rolls of silk imported by the Duchess of Marlborough in 1720 for the furnishing of Blenheim. The silk at the back and part of the carved and gilt beading is missing; the posts are of mahogany, resembling fig. 84 in their upper portion, but the plinths, partly concealed by the ill-arranged lower valance, are carved with a lattice-work tracery, a pattern beginning to find favour towards 1740. The constant references to important beds and bedchambers hung with red damask infer that this becoming colour was much in favour. In the more ordinary bedrooms, wall papers, and embroidered linen hangings for the beds were used. Mrs. Delany frequently mentions this work on linen in her letters, and in one dated 1743 to Mrs. Dewes, her fellow-enthusiast in needlework, she says:—

‘Pray do not let my pretty chair interfere with your more important bed, which I hope you will finish as fast as you can; your hangings must be brown and white flowers, and ought to be the same pattern as your bed.’

This bed was the joint-work of Mrs. Delany and Mrs. Dewes; the ground was nankeen, worked all over with patterns designed separately by Mrs. Delany; the patterns were leaves united by bows of ribbon, cut out







PLATE VI (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

MAHOGANY BED

HEIGHT, 12 FEET 4 INCHES

LENGTH, 7 „

BREADTH, 6 „ AT THE BASE OF COLUMNS

PROPERTY OF

THE MARQUESS OF EXETER

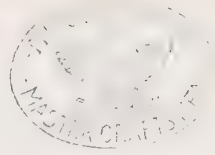












## ENGLISH FURNITURE

in white linen and sewn down with different varieties of knotting in white thread. She writes again in 1750 :—

‘I have done up a little apartment, hung it with blue and white paper, and intend a bed of blue and white linen, all Irish manufacture.’

These Georgian linen hangings have all nearly disappeared, or in some instances the work has been reapplied and so lost much of its interest. The previous custom of the mourning-bed, and how it was lent as occasion required to members of a family, has already been mentioned, and it continued even into the eighteenth century. Lady Bute, in 1726, witnessed one of these funeral receptions, held by the widow of her grandfather on the occasion of his death, which she described as follows :—

‘The apartments, the staircase, and all that could be seen of the house, were hung with black cloth ; the Duchess, closely veiled with crape, sate upright in her state-bed under a high black canopy, and at the foot stood, ranged like a row of servants at morning prayers, the grandchildren of the deceased Duke. Profound silence reigned, the room had no light but from a single wax taper, and the condoling female visitors, who curtsied in and out of it, and whose duty it was to tender in person their sympathy, approached the bed on tiptoe, and were clothed, if relations down to the hundredth cousin, in black glove mourning for the occasion.’

Fig. 87 represents the type of small domestic bed of the first half of the eighteenth century ; in this instance the hangings are of white silk embroidered with an oriental design in colours ; the back and tester being of satin with Chinese needlework, whilst the quilt and curtains are an English reproduction of the same design worked on silk. The tapestries on the walls are the celebrated series made at Mortlake representing James I. and his family.

Plate vi. is a highly finished bed from Burghley, of about 1745. The cornice is of florid design and French in feeling, over which is strained crimson velvet. The skill required to so neatly cover the lines of the carving with material is great, for not a crease is visible, and the effect given is that the forms are carved out of red velvet. The valance is plain and follows the undulating and serpentine lines of the cornice ; the cantonnière





FIG. 85.—MAHOGANY BED. Height, 10 feet 6 inches; length, 6 feet 6 inches; width, 5 feet 6 inches.  
Property of SIR FRANCIS BURDETT, Bart.





FIG. 86.—MAHOGANY AND GILT BED. Height, 12 feet 6 inches; length, 7 feet; width, 7 feet.  
Property of the DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.





FIG. 87.—UPHOLSTERED BED. Height, 6 feet; length, 6 feet; width, 4 feet.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY.





FIG. 88.—MAHOGANY BED.—Height, 12 feet 6 inches; length, 6 feet 6 inches; width, 6 feet.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF EXETER.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

holders are formed of an acanthus spray terminating in tassels; the curtains and basses are also of red velvet trimmed with a tasselled fringe; the inner valances, ceilings, back and quilt are of turquoise-coloured silk, the carved and upright mouldings of the back being covered with a pale gold coloured silk. The posts are delicately carved with an upright laurelling, banded with a ribbon and terminate in square plinths, for at this time decorative feet to bedposts began to disappear; this bed shows the early commencement of true Chippendale style, and its lightness of design may be attributed to French influence. Fig. 88 is another bed also at Burghley. The cresting to the cornice is elaborately carved, forming curved and broken pediments at the sides and centres, on which is strained blue moiré silk; the cantonnière holders are of pagoda form, and the double valance is in serpentine curves and edged with the original fringe; the headings above the pillows repeat the design of the cornice, and the back is panelled and covered with cream silk closely pasted on to the carving, and so precise is the workmanship that no joins in the silk are apparent. The four original curtains, which would have been of the plain blue moiré, are missing, and are replaced at the head by blue and silver hangings of a silk of about 1765; the posts are well considered in their proportions, and finish in square plinths carved with a lion's mask and a string of garrya bloom. The height of beds during the reign of George II. was considerably reduced, and did not again assume tall proportions.

The more florid and delicate taste in furniture that appeared in England after 1740 was chiefly due to the affectation of French manners and customs by the would-be leaders of fashion which encouraged the importation of foreign manufactures, but that a very strong feeling existed for the patronage of English silk manufactures as late as 1735 can be seen by the following extract from the *Monthly Intelligencer* of that year:—

‘March 1. Being her Majesty's Birthday, it was celebrated at Court with extraordinary magnificence. The Nobility, etc., were dressed in an exceeding rich and grand manner, the Ladies chiefly in stuffs of gold and silver, the gentlemen in cut and flowered velvet, and scarce any but of our own manufacture.’



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

Strong dissatisfaction against the foreign movement is seen by the many letters and essays published about that time. A correspondent in the *London Magazine* of November 1738 wrote :—

‘The ridiculous imitation of the French has now become the epidemical Dis-temper of this kingdom. The Travesty is universal ; poor England produces nothing fit to eat or drink or wear ; our cloaths, our Furniture, nay our food too, all is to come from France, and I am credibly informed that a Poulterer at Calais now actually supplies our polite tables with half their provisions. I don’t mean to underrate the French, but like all true Mimicks we only ape their imperfections and awkwardly copy those parts which all reasonable Frenchmen themselves condemn in the originals. If this folly went no further than disguising both our meats and ourselves in the French Modes, I should bear it with more patience, but when even the materials for the folly are to be brought over from France too, it becomes a much more serious consideration. Our Trade and Manufactures are at stake, and what seems at first sight only very silly, is in truth a great national Evil and a piece of Civil Immorality.’

This mimicry of another nation at the expense of our own trade is again attacked in the same magazine a little later, as follows :—

‘The Increase in our Buildings, Furniture, wrought plate, and jewels is a proof of the Increase of our Luxury, but not of the Increase of our trade ; for a man who is employed in Trade, knows better what to do with his money than to employ it in such vanities ; the Increase in our luxury is chiefly among our Placemen, Stock-jobbers, and other Plunderers of their country, who like common gamesters and common prostitutes usually spend in extravagance what they have got by plunder.’

Even as late as 1786, letters and essays were still being written deploring the introduction of this foreign taste, as the following extracts from contributions to the *Lounger* of that year show :—

‘A well-educated British gentleman it may be truly said is of no country whatever, he unites in himself the characteristics of all different nations ; he talks and dresses French, and sings Italian ; he rivals the Spaniard in indolence, and the German in drinking, his house is Grecian, his offices Gothic, and his furniture Chinese.’

And again, describing a Frenchman staying in an English country-house :—

‘Comi fo, it seems means vastly fine in his language, though we country folks, if we durst own it, find the comi fo things often very ill tasted and now and then a little



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

stinking. But we shall learn to like them monstrously by and by as Mons. de Sabot assures us. But my brother and my sister do all they can to wean him from his old customs. He fought hard for his pipe and spitbox, but my sister-in-law would not suffer the new window curtains and chair covers to be put up till he had given up both.'

The series of pictures of social life painted by Hogarth convey the manners, customs, and surroundings of the early Georgian people more forcibly than any verbal description. Frivolous insincerity, uncleanliness of mind and body, with disregard of law and order, were their prevailing characteristics.

We see by the *Annual Register* for 1759 that this importation of foreign furniture and fabrics, on the other hand, in some instances stimulated the encouragement of home produce, as there is a note to the effect that :

'Six carpets made by Mr. Whitty of Axminster in Devonshire, and two others made by Mr. Jesser of Froome in Somersetshire, all on the principle of Turkey carpets, have been produced to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, in consequence of the premiums proposed by the said Society for making such carpets, and proper judges being appointed to examine the same, gave it as their opinion that all the carpets produced were made in the manner of Turkey carpets, but much superior to them in beauty and goodness. The largest of the carpets produced is twenty-six feet six inches, by seventeen feet six inches.'

This Society in this same year offered a premium of £20 for:—

'Making one quart at least, of the best, most transparent and colorless varnish, equal in all respects to Martin's at Paris, commonly called copal varnish, the properties whereof are great hardness, a perfect transparency, without discoloring anything it is laid over, being capable of the finest polish, and not liable to crack. And for marbling the greatest quantity of paper, equal in goodness to the best marble paper imported, not less than one ream, £10.'

Many other rewards, amounting in all to some thousands of pounds, were offered in this year by this Society for different forms of pictorial and plastic arts, designs for fabrics and other native manufactures. Another interesting reference to an English carpet manufacture about this time is found in Lady Mary Coke's Journal in the year 1768.





FIG. 89. MAHOGANY COIN-CABINET.  
Property of SIDNEY LETTS, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

‘Went by the New Road to Moor Fields to the carpet Manufactory ; they make several different kinds, and some remarkably fine ; we saw one that was making for Lord Coventry, that he had agreed to give a hundred and forty guineas for ; it is indeed excessively fine. There are other kinds like the persian and look quite as well. I believe I shall afford myself one of them for the room that I am furnishing,’

Mahogany cabinets made between 1720 and 1735 are very scarce ; such as were made took the form of china or curiosity cupboards, but these were by no means general until after 1745. A Coin or Curiosity cabinet belonging to the second period of mahogany is given in fig. 89. This is plain save for the introduction of a light leaf moulded cornice and plinth ; it opens with two doors of dark Cuban wood, and within are a series of forty-two coin slides and two drawers. The stand is in great contrast to the plain top ; the frame is deeply carved in a simple key pattern, and supported on highly decorated cabriole legs connected by a festoon of open-work flowers and leaves centring in a large lion’s mask ; the back legs are equally elaborate, and the carving is exceedingly bold and decided. The piece is known to have been in the possession of Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill, and sold at the sale there. This famous house was bought in 1747 from a Mrs. Chevenix, the proprietress of a celebrated toyshop, and Walpole immediately commenced making additions and decorating it in what he considered to be the Gothic style. Sir Christopher Wren, in his efforts to revive Gothic architecture, had not even grasped its first principles ; Walpole’s attempts in this direction, though trumpery in construction, first inspired in this country a revival of the domestic architecture of former times, and he was quickly followed by a host of imitative architects who adapted the characteristics of a previous period to their clients’ requirements. In a letter dated 1753 from Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, he thus describes Strawberry Hill and its decorations :—

‘Now you shall walk into the house ; the bow-window leads into a little parlour hung with a stone-colored Gothic paper and Jackson’s Venetian prints : from hence you come to the hall and staircase ; imagine the walls covered with (I call it paper painted in





FIG. 90.—MAHOGANY CHINA-CABINET. Height, 7 feet 6 inches; width, 5 feet 2 inches; depth, 7 feet 5 inches. Property of the DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

perspective to represent) Gothic fretwork : the lightest Gothic balustrade to the staircase, adorned with antelopes, our supporters, bearing shields. The room on the ground-floor nearest you is a bed-chamber hung with yellow paper and prints framed in a new manner invented by Lord Cadogan, with black and white borders printed; over this is Mr. Chute's bed-chamber, hung with red in the same manner; in the tower beyond it is the charming closet where I am writing to you. It is hung with green paper and water-color pictures; out of this closet is the room where we always live, hung with a blue and white paper, adorned with festoons and a thousand plump chairs, couches, and luxurious settees covered with linen of the same pattern. Underneath this room is a cool little hall, where we generally dine, hung with paper to imitate Dutch tiles. We picque ourselves upon nothing but simplicity, and have no carvings, gildings, paintings, inlayings or tawdry businesses.'

The description conveys a strange mixture of ideas, but is a distinct and original departure in arrangement from the taste that surrounded Walpole. The elements of cheap building evidently began with the shoddy attempts in Gothic at Strawberry Hill, for the castellated parapet to the house, constructed of lath and plaster, had to be renewed three times in thirty years. Pope's celebrated 'romantic grotto' at Twickenham, spoken of in such terms of contempt by Dr. Johnson, is another instance of the puerile attempts in decoration by the fashionable amateur of this time. The walls of this grotto were covered with shells interspersed with pieces of looking-glass; there was a camera-obscura in one corner, and in another a passage opening to the river, paved with pebbles and shells. The furniture is described as being of the order called 'rustic,' and was so highly valued by Pope that he bequeathed it in its entirety to his beloved female friend Martha Blount.

Fig. 90 is a stately china cabinet of about 1730, which stands 7 feet 6 inches high. The top is surmounted by a broken pediment with a small and plain plinth to hold a vase or bust, and is closely carved with acanthus and key pattern in low relief. The front is of architectural design, divided into three arched compartments, the spandrels and pilasters being left plain, and the carving confined to the headings, cappings, bases, and borders; two fine scrolls and a carved cornice head the outer com-



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

partment; the rail of the stand is composed of a deep acanthus frieze supported on six well-proportioned legs that finish in scaling and lion paws; the hinges to the doors are in strong projection, adding greatly to the finish of the piece; the decoration is restrained throughout, and in scale accords with the careful proportions of the structure. It is an example filling an interesting link between the periods immediately before Chippendale. It was probably one of a pair made originally to contain some of the important and celebrated china at Blenheim. This collection, at one time housed in a pavilion built for the purpose, was given to John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, on the understanding that a suitable arrangement should be made for its installation.

The same sentiment of decoration is noticeable in the sideboard (fig. 91), which is a few years later in date; the frame supporting the marble top is carved with a large key pattern divided by square panels of acanthus, at some time cut through the centre; the legs are of terminal shape, headed with satyrs' masks, from which fall pendants of husks on a ribbed ground; the feet are square and foliated. Another sideboard of this type, of about 1745, is fig. 92. The decoration of the frieze resembles in its character the preceding piece, and the legs are of the same terminal shape; the scrolled shoulders are, however, headed with acanthus; the feeling throughout is classical, a feeling that was revived again later in the century, by the brothers Adam. This classical motive is also apparent in the writing-table (fig. 93), made about 1740; the cornice mouldings at this date became more delicate in scale, and in this instance the capping consists of a fine leaf pattern, beneath which runs a frieze of the wave volute boldly treated. The front opens in doors on which are applied large foliated pateræ enclosed in oval mouldings of French design; the panels are bevelled with a classical leaf moulding, the sides are also treated classically with a festoon of acorns, foliage, and flowers, headed by a lion's mask holding a brass ring; the spandrels in the arch are carved with the cabochon and acanthus introduced about that time.



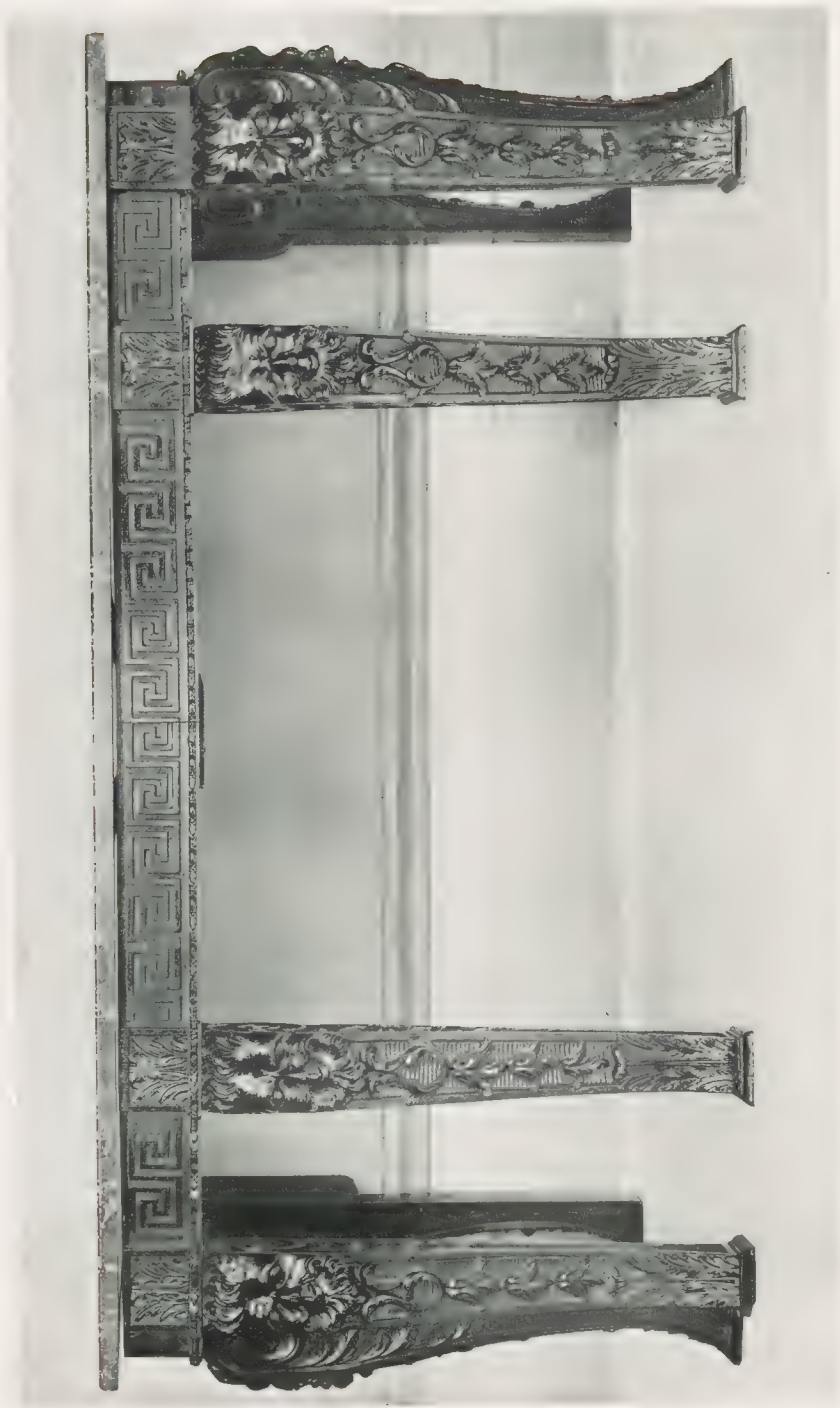


FIG. 91. MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD. Length, 6 feet; height, 2 feet 10 inches.  
Property of F. PARTRIDGE, F.S.



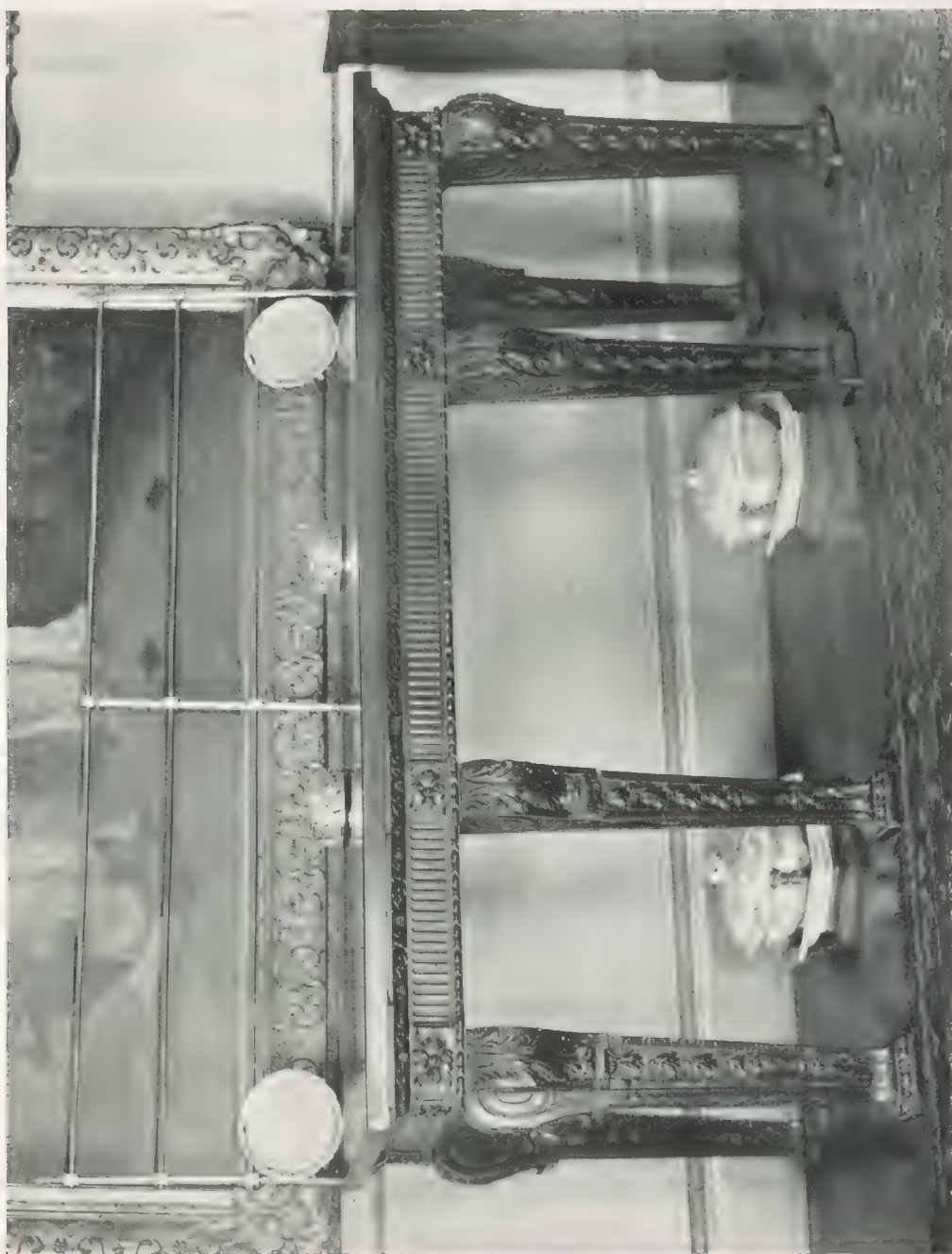


FIG. 92.—MAHOAGANY SIDEBOARD. Length, 6 feet; height, 2 feet 10 inches.  
Property of Miss TYNDALL.





FIG. 93. MAHOGANY WRITING-TABLE.  
Property of VISCOUNT ENFIELD.





FIG. 94.—MAHOGANY CHEST OF DRAWERS. Length, 4 feet 4 inches; height, 3 feet 2 inches.  
Property of MESSRS. ISAACS





FIG. 95.—DOUBLE CHEST OF DRAWERS. Height, 6 feet; width, 3 feet 6 inches; depth, 1 foot 8 inches. Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE



FIG. 96.—DEAL PAINTED OVERMANTEL. Height, 6 feet ; length, 5 feet 6 inches.  
Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.

In fig. 94, a chest of drawers with doors, is found the same admixture of classical and French tastes. The top is of marble, enclosed and edged with an open brass banding of diagonal pattern ; the serpentine front opens in two large doors enclosing a series of drawers ; the front is occupied by a circle and patera of French design framed in a series of mouldings forming artificial drawer fronts, to which are attached handles in the style of Louis xv. ; the corners are treated as lion-headed terminals carved with acanthus ; the sides resemble the front in their decoration ; the colour of





FIG. 97.—MAHOGANY WRITING-CABINET. Height, 7 feet 9 inches; width, 3 feet 1 inch; depth, 2 feet. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.







PLATE VII (AGE OF MAHOGANY)  
WRITING-CABINET

HEIGHT, 7 FEET 9½ INCHES  
DEPTH, 2 " 2 "  
WIDTH, 5 "

PROPERTY OF  
H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the mahogany is exceedingly dark and rich. English furniture of this particular construction made at this exact period is extremely rare. The double chest of drawers (fig. 95) is also of a date about 1740, and preserves a certain amount of classical simplicity; the decoration is severe, although every member of the cornice is carved, and the plinths to the graceful columns are covered with pateræ; the drawers are plain and furnished with simple brass handles and key-plates; the two portions of the piece are divided by the favourite rosette and ribbon-band of the time. The whole of this third period before the publication of the *Director* by Chippendale shows signs of increasing ornamentation, and very frequently a tendency towards the French taste.

Another example, classical in feeling, of rather earlier date can be found in the overmantel at Longford Castle (fig. 96). The broken pediment is most graceful in proportion, and the beautiful basket of flowers forming the centre is exceptionally delicate in its carving; it is of soft wood painted white, and was probably intended to contain a picture; it has been separated from its original mantelpiece. The writing-cabinet (fig. 97) is a severe example of the classical taste, made very much on the lines of walnut scrutoires of the earlier period. The cornice and frieze are beautiful in their proportions and are of delicate workmanship; the doors, composed of raised panels, are framed in two pilasters; the lower portion is of bureau form, the escutcheon on the flap being of carved wood, which is of rare occurrence; the plinth is minutely carved, but the bracket feet are boldly gadrooned.

Plate VII. is a writing-cabinet similar in motive to the last example, but later in date, being about 1745. The pilasters framing the doors have ornate capitals, quite out of scale to their bases. The applied fret-work frieze is characteristic of this time; the graceful, undulating mouldings on the doors, with their decorated corners, redeem the otherwise empty and square proportions of the piece; the figure of the mahogany veneer is unusually fine, and of the variety termed 'clouded.' The lower portion





FIG. 98.—MAHOGANY BOOK-CASE. Height, 8 feet; width, 6 feet 8 inches; depth, 1 foot 10 inches.  
Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

opens as a writing-flap supported on the two small drawers; the handles are original.

Fig. 98 is a bookcase of exquisite workmanship made between 1740 and 1750, and undoubtedly by Thomas Chippendale. This remarkable piece of mahogany furniture consists of a centre piece with two wings; the former is in projection surmounted by a broken pediment, carved



FIG. 99.—DETAIL OF MAHOGANY BOOK-CASE. Property of H. PERCY DRAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

with an egg and tongue and small leaf moulding, a somewhat large plinth, delicately decorated with a slender wreath, filling the centre ; the cornice, with its deep drip moulding, is supported and shouldered by two scroll brackets that terminate in eagles' heads holding pendants of husks and oak-leaves ; these shoulders (fig. 99) occupy the entire depth of the cabinet and pull open as secret drawers. The face of these scrolls is filled with superbly carved acanthus and husks on a matted ground in the Renaissance taste. The glass to the doors is framed in from the front by a rose and ribbon moulding, no putty being employed ; the centre opens in an arch framed in egg and tongue, the spandrels and heading to this are plain, save for a laurel swag caught up by a central patera and ribbon bow ; the pilasters supporting this arch and framing the door are faced with classic heads, backed by shells, from which fall laurel pendants. The lower portion is formed of three cupboards, the centre panel being decorated with a winged satyr's mask on a double shell, backed by laurel pendants. (This same design



FIG. 100.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR.  
Property of SIR FRANCIS BURDETT, Bart.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

can be found on the key-board heading to the organ, Plate C. III., *Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director*.) The side-doors are plain; they open on a series of little compartments, and the doors are lined with narrow shelves and wire rails for small bottles. The plinth mouldings consist of a wide plain ogee framed between two carved borders; no keyholes are visible, as they are under the mouldings, and an absolute knowledge of the locks is necessary before any door can be opened; the colour of the piece is fine light chestnut, and the carving throughout is as sharp as chased metal; the inner construction and secrecy of the openings makes it probable that this cabinet was made for a doctor's use, and the upper compartment intended for books.

It is now necessary to again pick up the evolution of mahogany sofas and chairs, and the arm-chair (fig. 100), one of a set at Ramsbury Manor, is a most interesting example of transition, for the hoop back and plain splat are retained whilst the front of the seat-rail is convex and carved with



FIG. 101.—MAHOGANY SETTEE. Length, 6 feet; height, 3 feet.  
Property of SIR FRANCIS BURDETT, Bart.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the decoration of 1730. The arm-supports are decorated at their bases, and the cabriole legs, although terminating in ball and claw feet, show a tendency to the lightness that was developing after the middle of the century.

The long settee (fig. 101), one of a pair, matches this set, but the back, although of chair form, is upholstered; it has been re-covered with material of an earlier date.

The walnut love-seat, one of a pair, with the chair to match (fig. 102), almost correspond in date to the last examples, proving that furniture of high quality was still made in this wood as late as 1735. The arms of the settee finish in small eagles' heads, but differ in shape to those of George 1., while the curved supports forming their necks are indicative of the later date. The cabochon ornament, with its surrounding carving on the shoulders of the legs is rarely found on walnut, but much employed on mahogany chairs after 1738. This chair and settee, forming part of a set, were originally at Pewsey in Wiltshire, and it is probable that they, with the Ramsbury Manor examples, were of Irish manufacture, which would account for certain anachronisms in the designs of both.

The upholstered arm-chair (fig. 103) repeats the motives of the sofa (Plate vi.), and both evidently at one time formed part of a set. The back is low with a serpentine top; the arms, ending in lions' heads, are constructed for upholstery, and the supports have a rapid rake, the upper face of them being carved, a novel feature in the decoration of arm-chairs; the lower portion of the frame is convex and picks up the shoulder of the cabriole legs, and the carving is somewhat foreign in style. This sofa and chair are to all appearances by the same hand as the stained table (Plate v.), in all probability by Giles Grendey of Clerkenwell.

There is a strong similarity of construction between this chair and fig. 104, where the decorated frame is omitted; the arms in this instance finish in roses and the legs are hipped on to the frame; the feet end in scrolls in the French manner, the back legs are without carving. Fig. 105



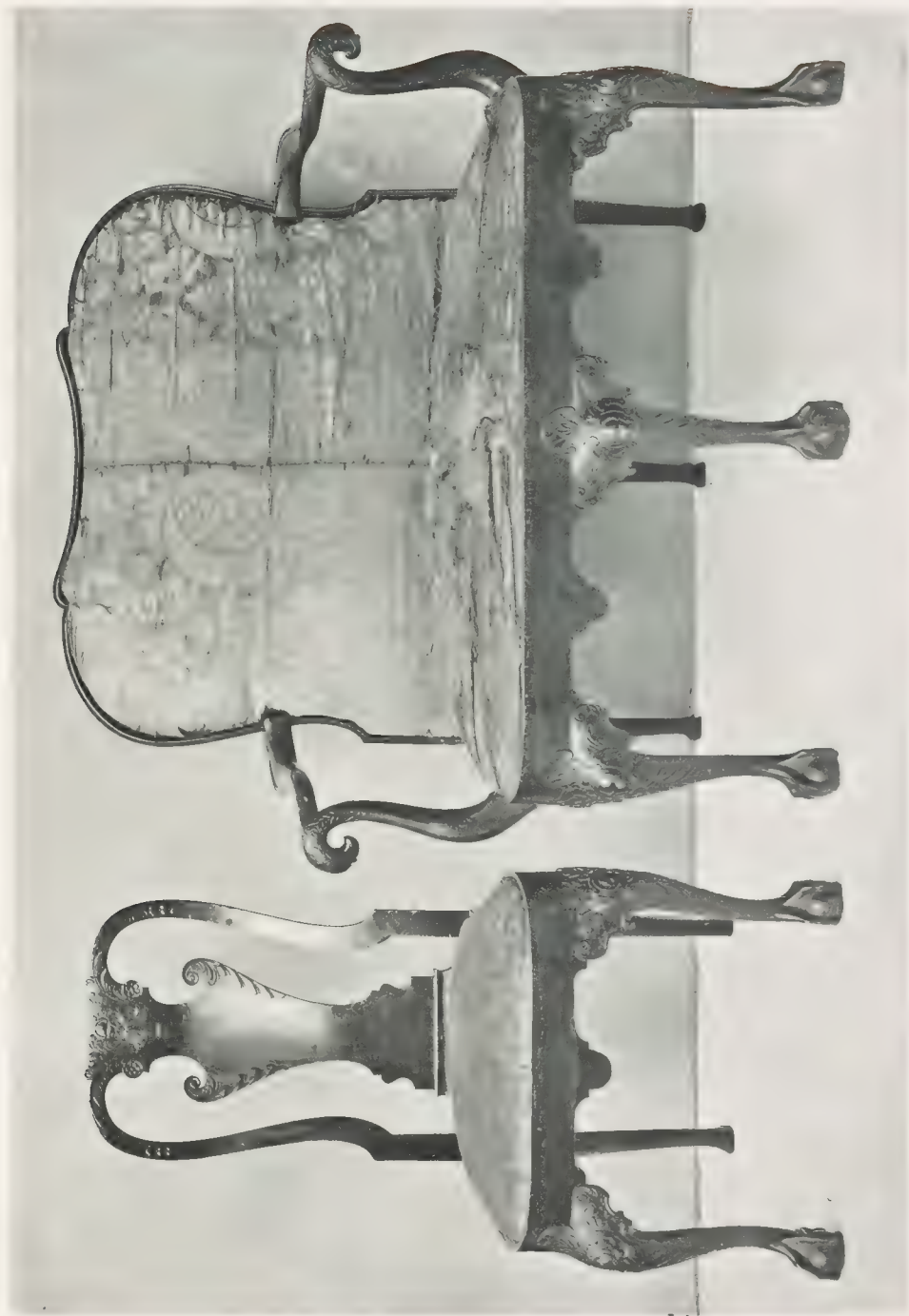


FIG. 102. WALNUT CHAIR AND SETTEE. Property of the VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM.





FIG. 103.—MAHOGANY UPHOLSTERED ARM-CHAIR.  
Property of Messrs. ISAACS.



FIG. 104.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 2 inches;  
width, 2 feet 2 inches. Property of Messrs. J. MALLETT AND SON.





FIG. 105.—MAHOOGANY CHAIR. Height, 3 feet; width, 2 feet.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLET AND SON.

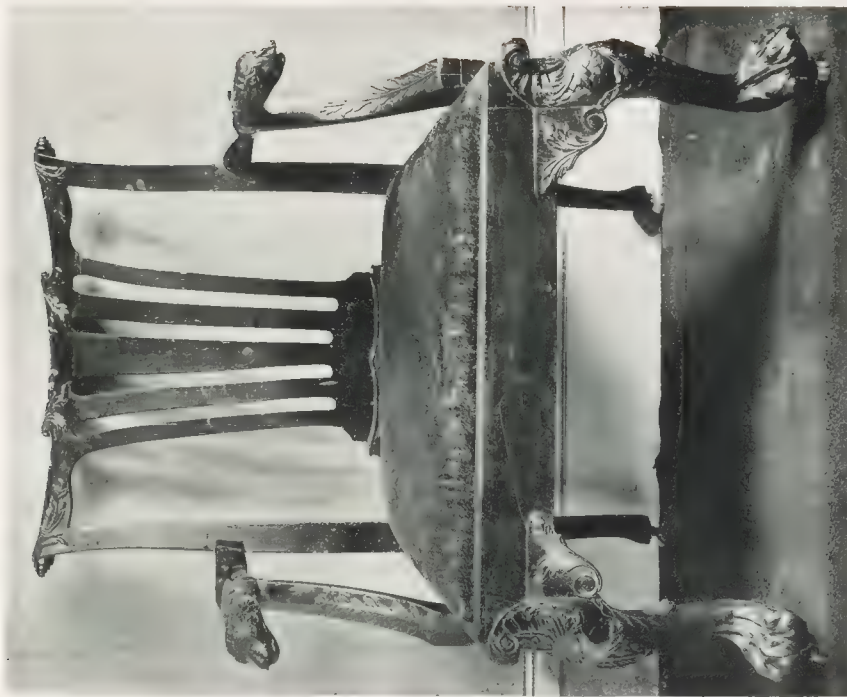


FIG. 106.—MAHOOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 2 inches.  
Property of SIDNEY LETTIS, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

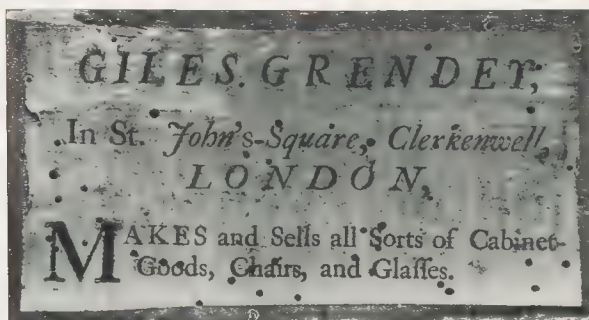


FIG. 107.—LABEL UNDERNEATH SEAT-RAIL.

is one of the plain chairs belonging to this set, and underneath it is the interesting label (fig. 107) of Giles Grendey, who was evidently a cabinet-maker of French origin. These handsome, though heavy types, with upholstered backs made for the display of needlework or tapestry, were called at the time French chairs. In fig. 106 the back is square in shape, the top rail ends in whorls, and the splat is divided into five simple perpendicular uprights, the arms terminate in dogs' heads, the legs are hipped on to a plain frame and finish in bold lion paws; the design of the carving coincides with the two preceding specimens. The width of these last chairs seems excessive, being two feet four inches, but the hoop had by this time assumed such outrageous proportions that chairs no doubt had to be constructed with a special view to its accommodation and display. In a letter to the *London Magazine*, dated January 1741, a correspondent makes the following remarks, which are interesting as showing an accurate picture of a fine lady of the time :—

‘As to the origin of the Hoop, whether it was an invention, as some say, of our Country women, or as others, that it was first imported from France, I will not venture to detirmine, and I have consulted the Records of Pantins and other Habit shops about Covent Garden without finding any satisfactory account. I am apt to imagine that it took its first rise only by enlarging the form of the antient fardingale, and was confined to a very moderate and decent circumference; but when Innovations of any kind are introduced, it is very difficult to know to what a degree they may be carried; this has been the fate of this very petticoat, which from its circumference originally took the



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

name of a hoop, but which at present extending itself into a wide oblong form has nothing of the primitive Hoop but its mere name left. I have been in a moderate large room where there have been but two ladies, who had not space enough to move without lifting up their Petticoats higher than their Grandmothers would have thought decent : I believe every one has observed to what pains a Lady is put to reduce that wide extended Petticoat to the narrow limits of a Chair or Chariot : but let her manage her getting in or out ever so skilfully or modestly, yet she makes but a very odd grotesque Figure with her Petticoat standing up half-way the glasses, and her head just peeping out above them.'

The Countess of Hartford writes in one of her letters this same year :—

'Few unmarried women appear abroad in robes or sacques ; and as few married ones would be thought genteel in anything else. I own myself so awkward as to be yet unable to use myself to that dress, unless for visits of ceremony ; since I do not feel at home in my own house without an apron ; nor can endure a hoop, that would overturn all the chairs and stools in my closet.'



FIG. 108.—MAHOGANY DOUBLE CHAIR. Length, 4 feet 4 inches.





FIG. 109.—MAHOGANY CHAIR. Height, 3 feet ; width, 1 foot 10 inches. Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.

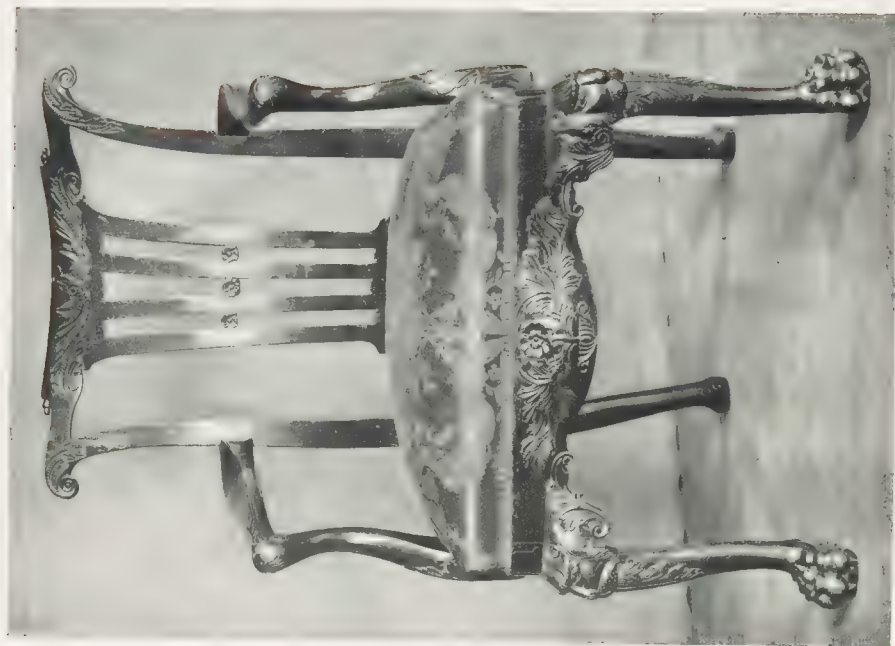


FIG. 110.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR.  
Property of D. L. ISAACS, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

And even as late as 1772, Lady Mary Coke makes the following entry in her diary :—

‘I am very glad to dine by myself, for though the dress is very fine, a great hoop is a very troublesome affair at a great dinner.’

Madame de Bocage, in her description of London in 1750, seems to have been struck with the comparative scarcity of arm-chairs, for she says :—

‘There are scarce any arm chairs in their apartments, they are satisfied with common chairs. The women who use no paint and are always laced seem fond of these seats.’

Throughout the eighteenth century most arm-supports to chairs and sofas rake backwards, for the hoop died hard and lasted as a Court fashion well into the reign of George III. Fig. 108 is a double chair or settee, also of large proportion and much resembling the last specimen. In this instance the uprights of the splats are connected with small rosettes, the arms finish in lions’ heads, and the outer legs are carved with masks; the centre leg is decorated in a different manner and shows a tendency towards French ornamentation; the pendants between the legs are rather solid in shape, and the carving on them is coarse. Fig. 109 is a chair without arms, evidently by the same maker as the settee to which it corresponds in every particular. It will be noticed that a slight beaded ornament is introduced in each instance on the shoe (that being the technical word for the projection which receives the base of the splat). Fig. 110 is an arm-chair of this same character, but possesses a more refined sense of lightness than hitherto met with in this square-headed type; the carving of the front rail and lions’ heads suggest Irish workmanship, and the straight treatment of the arms is unusual for this period.



## CHAPTER IV



ABOUT 1740 a change appeared in mahogany furniture, and elegance of line and form began to supplant the picturesque and more solid designs of the previous twenty years. The backs and legs of chairs were now treated more in sympathy with each other, the open work of the former being detailed into a series of curved flat strappings, developed by the hands of Chippendale and his contemporaries into ingenious variations of the same motive. Usually the design of this strapping was contained within the limits of a vase-shaped splat, but occasionally it is found spreading over the back as in the example, fig. 111, which is one of a set made about 1735. The design filling this hooped back is very original, being an open convex strapwork in the form of a shell, supported by a flat double loop merging into the curves of the uprights; these latter still have the angle found on rather earlier chairs; the ball and claw legs shouldered with acanthus are of slight form. The pattern of this chair has been accepted as designed by Thomas Chippendale, and the delicate and accurate quality of the carving, in conjunction with the comparative lightness of construction, makes this supposition extremely probable. It has also been stated that this chair formed part of a large set made especially for Marie Antoinette by his firm, six of which are still in the Louvre, the remainder having come back to England in 1810. There is little doubt that this set of chairs was once in the possession of the unfortunate Queen, as the various traditions regarding them appear accurate, although they must have been completed by Chippendale at least fifteen years before she was born.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

Fig. 112 is a chair-back settee of similar design made in walnut, and so fine in execution that it is probably the work of the same firm, and conclusively proves the early date of the chairs. It would be interesting if documentary evidence could be obtained proving the exact date of Thomas Chippendale's birth, as this would be a guide to the position he held at this time and so prove the influence of his earlier work upon his fellow-craftsmen.

It is quite possible that the chair (fig. 113) is also a specimen of Chippendale's early work, as it possesses the sense of completeness rarely found in other contemporary furniture.

The top of the back is hooped, but the uprights are straight, curling into rose-headed acanthus sprays. The flat strapping fills the back, taking the form of interlacing ovals; the arms scroll outwardly, and are lightly carved on the upper surfaces; the acanthus on the shoulders of the ball and claw legs is exceedingly careful in touch, inferring the work of a superior craftsman; the back legs are plain but perfect in their curves, and the frame is edged with an scalloped border. The whole chair is significant of an original effort in furniture, and conveys a most pleasing feeling of proportion. Fig. 114 is another interesting specimen of this same design, in all probability originating from the same firm. It is wider and lighter in character, and the ovals are



FIG. 111.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.



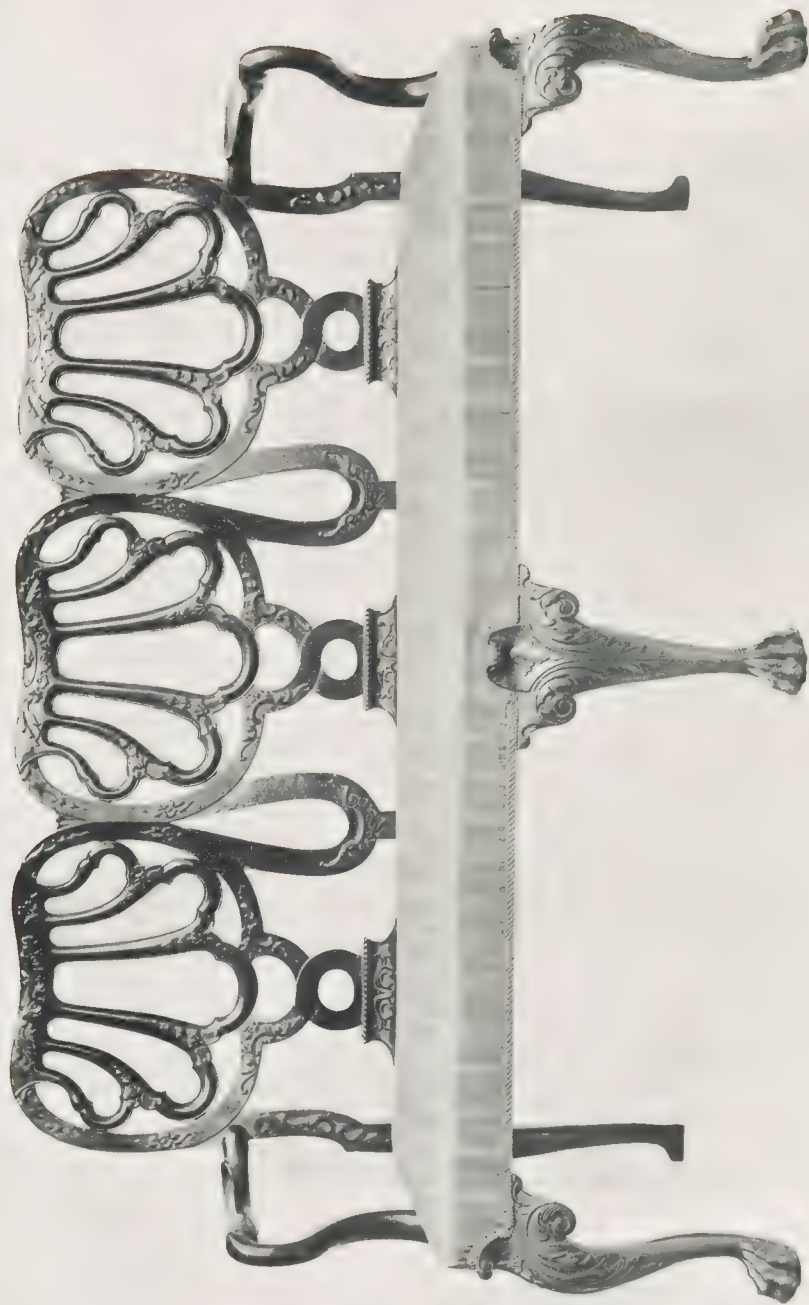


FIG. 112.—WALNUT SETTEE. Property of Messrs. J. MALLETT AND SON.



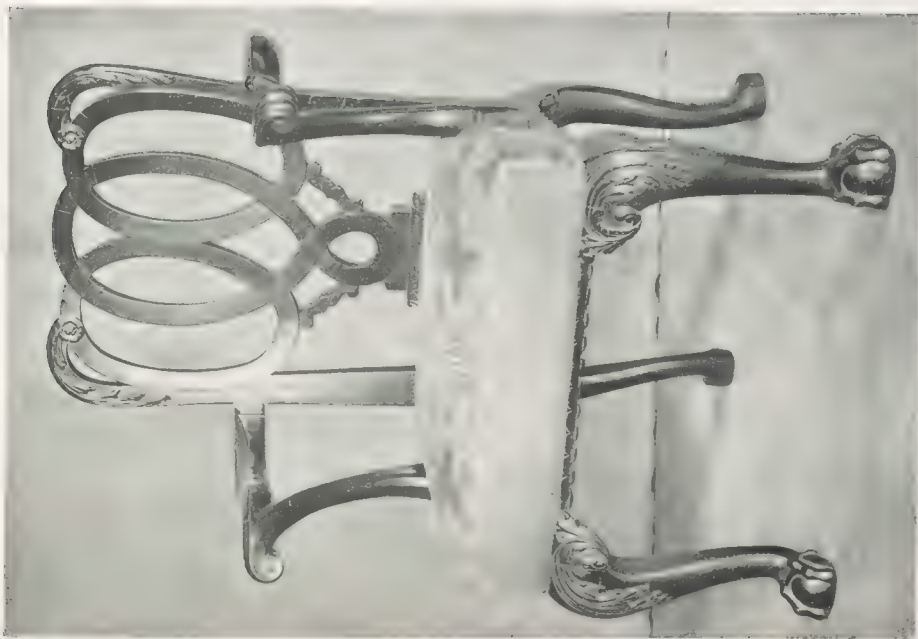


FIG. 113.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Property of D. L. Isaacs, Esq.

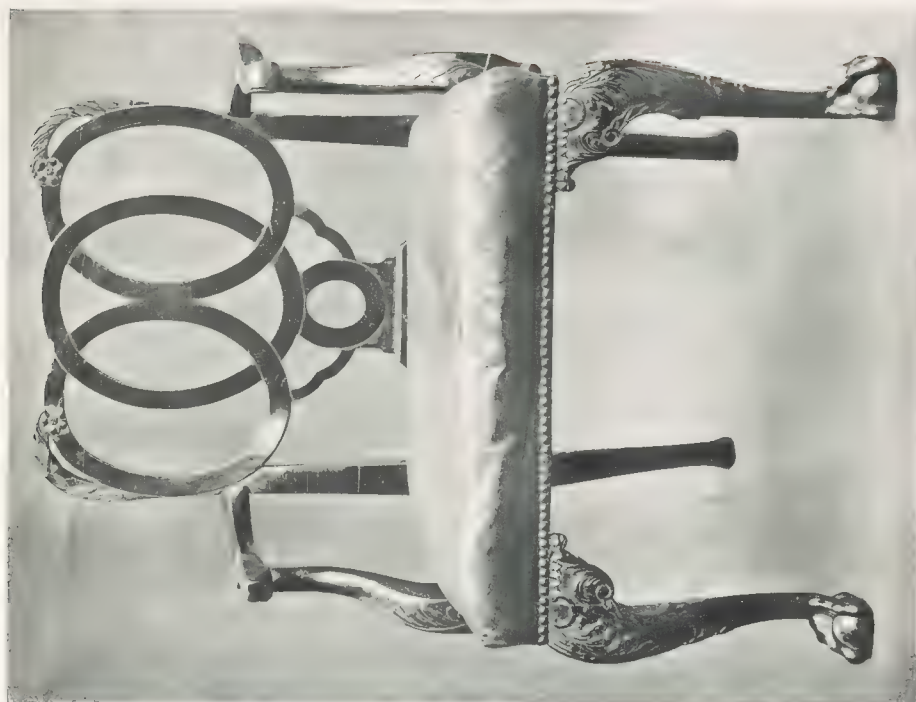


FIG. 114.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Property of Weedon Grossmith, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

more disconnected; the arms finish abruptly, and their supports are decorated. These three chairs and the settee represent an entirely new departure in the form of the back.

The carving on the sofa (fig. 115) is open in character; the legs are rectangular, approximating the height of the back, and the legs, exceptionally good in curve, are hipped into the seat; the rail consists of a bold hollow moulding decorated with two pendants.

Arms are introduced of the earlier C scroll type, broad and pronounced in their curve, on the sofa at Penshurst (fig. 116), of a date about 1735; it has the original silk covering—a design of birds, monsters, clouds, and large flowers in various colours on a black background; the legs correspond in their curves to the C scroll of the arms and finish in very delicately carved lion paws. The light, careful touch shown in the decoration resembles that found on furniture of a rather later date proved to have been the work of Thomas Chippendale.

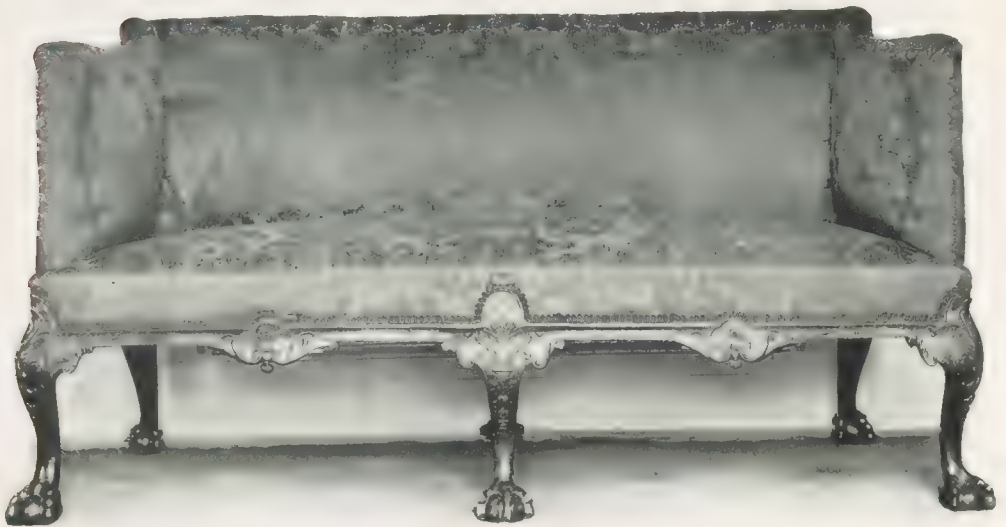


FIG. 115.—MAHOGANY SOFA. Length, 5 feet; height, 3 feet 4 inches.  
Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.





FIG. 116.—MAHOGANY SOFA. Length, 5 feet 6 inches; height, 3 feet 6 inches.  
Property of LORD DE LISLE AND DUDLEY.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

But little is known of the career of this celebrated craftsman, and so much has recently been written on his work and influence that it is not necessary to attempt here to introduce his personality in connection with the furniture called after his name. It has been proved that he came to London before the year 1727 with his father, who was a carver, gilder, and cabinet-maker; that he married his first wife in 1748, took a shop in 1749, moved to St. Martin's Lane in 1753, and published his celebrated book, *The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director*, in 1754. Facts also go to prove that he died at the age of about seventy. If the date of his birth was, say 1709, he would have been thirty-nine when he married and forty-four at the date of the *Director's* appearance. These dates are given merely to suggest that it was not till after the appearance of the *Director* that Chippendale's influence really affected English furniture.

Fig. 117 is an early form of the square-back chair, with a perforated splat so frequently and incorrectly associated with Chippendale's name; its date would be about 1740. The strapwork of this splat is varied in an uncommon manner by the introduction of a bold design of dolphins facing each other with open mouths; the carving of the top rail is simple, and well carries out the curved lines; the arms scroll outwards, finishing



FIG. 117.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLET AND SON.







PLATE VIII (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

S E T T E E

LENGTH, 4 FEET 2 INCHES

HEIGHT, 3 " 7 "

PROPERTY OF

MISS MILLS



23. 3. 21. 1.









## ENGLISH FURNITURE

in flat eagles' heads, a decoration very popular with young collectors, and in consequence a large supply of chairs with these arms is always to be found. In this instance the carving is original, and also the needlework of the seat; the nulling along the seat-rail, introduced about this time, harmonises with the scaled decoration of the back. Fig. 118 is a chair certainly made after 1740; it is one of a set. A small piece of carved drapery with fringe and tassels forms the cresting, a very favourite ornamentation at this time that was sometimes accompanied by a decorative frilling, starting from the corners and finishing on the splat in two roses. The splat is perforated in a series of flat loopings, in which the upper present new features; the legs show the lightness and delicacy that was gradually being adopted, and are carved with cabochon decoration in place of the usual acanthus. The settee or double chair, one of a pair (fig. 119), matches these chairs, and is also covered with the original needlework. The entire set was probably of country make.

Plate VIII. is another settee of about 1745, rather more elaborate, and with the same swag of drapery introduced below the top rail, the latter being carved with a complicated shell decoration again repeated as a cresting in the centre. The splats are broad and perforated with rather meaningless decoration, the arms being plain, reproducing those of an earlier period. The seat-rail is waved, to give an effect of lightness, and the ornamentation of the legs is similar in character to the top rail. Fig. 120 is an arm-chair, one of a pair, of about the same date, in which the drapery is



FIG. 118.—MAHOGANY CHAIR. Height, 3 feet.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

more elaborated and entirely occupies the top rail; the tassels are prolonged into the strapwork, which is somewhat confused in design, and the arms terminate in eagles' heads, resembling in their treatment those on earlier chairs. The carving and execution again infer that the work is of country manufacture, probably of Suffolk origin. Ten plain chairs also exist, completing this set. Fig. 121 is of most extraordinary quality and elaborate workmanship; the back consists of a most ingenious combination of the Anne hoop forming a centre, with the square headings of later date on either side; the splats are very open and fanciful in character, and composed of sprays of oak-leaves and berries intertwined with



FIG. 119.—MAHOGANY SETTEE. Length, 4 feet 4 inches; height, 3 feet 2 inches.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.







PLATE IX (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

WRITING-CHAIR

HEIGHT OF BACK, 35 INCHES

HEIGHT OF SEAT,  $18\frac{1}{2}$  "

DEPTH OF SEAT,  $19\frac{1}{2}$  "

PROPERTY OF

THOMAS WISE, Esq.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

ribbons and framed in C scrolls; the shoes forming the bases are unusually deep and solid. The arms are straight, terminating in animals' heads; the seat-frame is richly carved in perforated festoons, with scalloped edges, and centres in a grotesque mask pendant; the legs are particularly strong and solid at the shoulder, they are decorated throughout and finish in lions'-paw feet, the omission of centre legs demanding unusual strength of construction; the seat is covered with the original needlework, and the colour of the wood is a rich deep brown. The date of this remarkable settee would be shortly before 1750, and it is undoubtedly the work of Thomas Chippendale under strong French influence.

Plate ix. is an interesting writing-chair, resembling in motive those made in walnut early in the century. The back has a branching splat, carved in low relief, with disconnected floral sprays; the top rail is semicircular, finishing in scrolled ends starting from two flat rosettes; the uprights of the back are lyre-shaped, and the angle forming the base is the reverse of that found on walnut chairs; the arms turn rapidly outwards and finish in rosettes; the legs and shell-pendant have the characteristics of the chairs of 1730, which is probably the date of this example. The uncertain and flat ornamentation, with the style of the feet, are indicative of Irish workmanship. In fig. 122 can be seen the usual type of



FIG. 120.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.



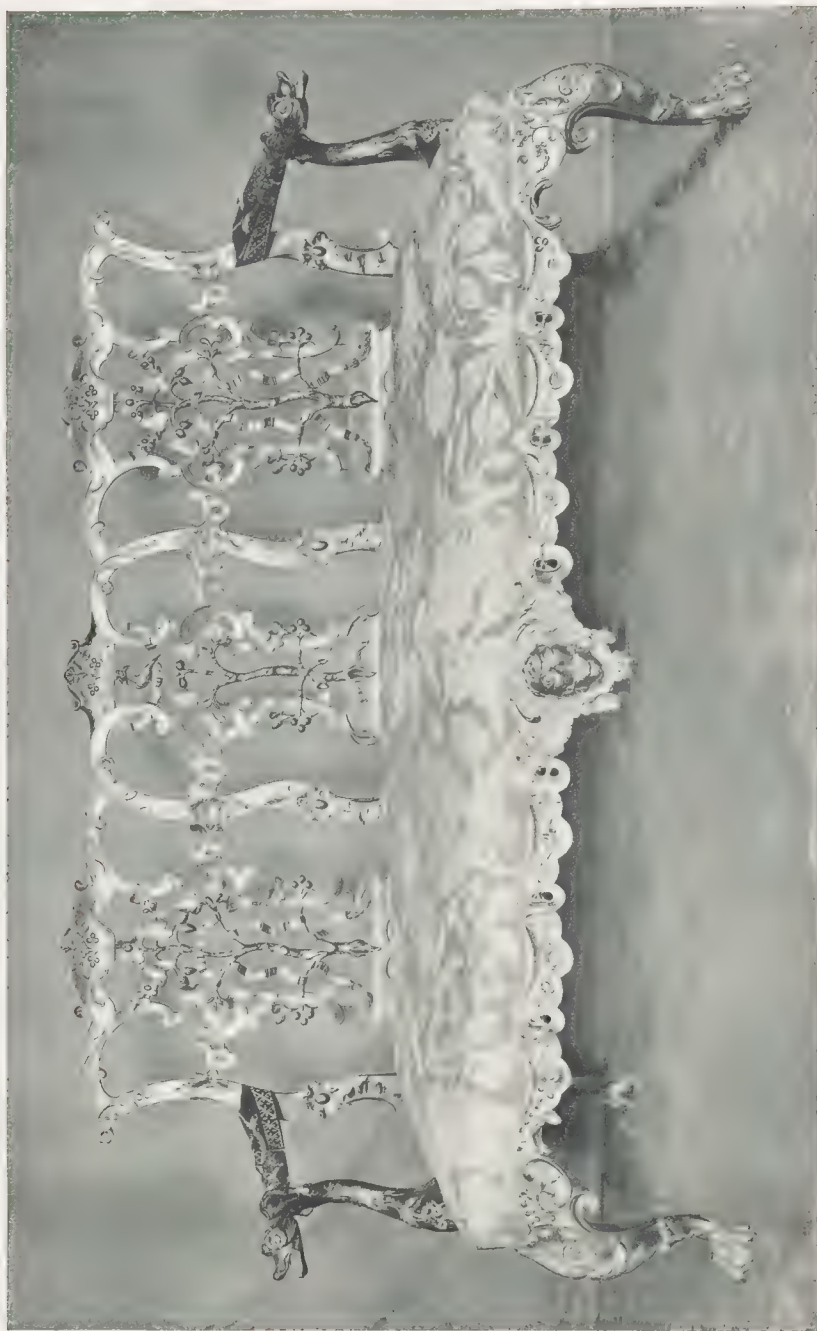


FIG. 121. — MAHOGANY SETTEE. Length, 6 feet; height, 3 feet 2 inches.  
Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

writing-chair of this period, in which two and sometimes three strapwork splats are introduced somewhat on the principle of the wheel-chair. In this example the front rail is serpentine and the centre decorated with a floral spray; the strapwork is of particularly good design, and the seat is covered with its original needlework. The legs do not present any new feature, excepting the claw, which in many instances towards the end of its existence began to be slighter, as in the present example. As Chippendale,



FIG. 122.—MAHOGANY WRITING-CHAIR. Height, 2 feet 8 inches; width, 2 feet 3 inches.  
Property of MESSRS. ISAACS.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

in the first edition of the *Director*, does not once illustrate this form of foot, it seems safe to assume that he omitted it as old-fashioned and not in accordance with the more delicate and fanciful style he was desirous of introducing. Fig. 123 is a specimen lighter in construction; the semi-circular rail is here supported by three cylindrical uprights and two strapwork splats slightly raked outwards; the seat is set anglewise, often the case in these chairs. The small size of this particular example infers it was made for a woman's use. Fig. 124 is another form of writing-chair. The upholstered back and arms form one graceful curve, the latter terminate in dogs' heads supported by facings of a good ringed moulding that also surrounds the seat-frame. The front legs are in pure Chippendale style; the ornament on the shoulders in slight relief, and the rather delicate scrolled feet decorated with a cabochon, show the Louis xv. feeling that was gradually influencing ornamentation. Fig. 125 is another upholstered writing-chair, and of rare shape. The arms are faced with carving of remarkable execution, each terminating in an eagle's head seizing an asp. The wave pattern introduced round the frame is divided by the cresting surmounting the front legs,



FIG. 123—MAHOGANY WRITING-CHAIR. Height, 2 feet 6 inches; width, 1 foot 10 inches. Property of MESSRS. J. MALLET AND SON.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

which are shouldered with eagles' heads and elaborate acanthus reaching down to the feathered claw. It would be difficult to find a chair of this class higher in technical excellence or capable of affording more practical comfort.

The easy-chair of 1740 still continued to be made on the lines of the earlier grandfather chair, high in the back, with wings at the sides, and very frequently covered with needlework. In fig. 126 the principal characteristics of the Anne chairs are preserved, but the arm supports



FIG. 124.—MAHOGANY WRITING-CHAIR. Height, 2 feet 6 inches ;  
width, 1 foot 10 inches. Property of D. L. ISAACS, Esq.





FIG. 125. MAHOGANY WRITING-CHAIR. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

have no C scrolls and run straight with the seat. In this example their form is lost through recent bad upholstery; the loose squab is also missing. The legs are of ball and claw type of about 1745; the seat-rail is bordered with a gadrooned nulling of this time.

By the year 1745 mahogany furniture was employed in the bedrooms of the more recently decorated houses, though descriptions of rooms furnished in the new style are scarce. Bishop Richard Pococke, in his travels through England in 1754, describes some richly decorated rooms, and mentions mahogany furniture, though evidently the gilding, velvets, and marbles chiefly attracted his attention.

'Beyond Salisbury, three miles we went to Langborough; it is esteemed as one of the best finished and furnished houses in England, and in the gallery are some very fine original paintings, marble tables and bronze groups, and the chimney boards throughout the house are made of Chinese pictures which show several of their customs. Our sleeping apartment is furnished with chintz and Indian paper. In one apartment the furniture is of mahogany, carved and gilt, and many fine Japan pieces of furniture.'

In writing of Eastbury, the house belonging to Mr. Dodding-ton, which cost £200,000, he describes the drawing-rooms as furnished with

'Consoles on which are the twelve Cæsars, the heads in bronze, the busts in a kind of agate, the walls and ceilings of stucco beautifully adorned with flowers and architectonick ornaments gilt. The best drawing-room is hung with flowered uncut velvet of Genoa, and there are several very fine pictures in it; the next is a dressing-room hung with green satin, on each side of which large flower vases are painted in oyl colors. The room beyond



FIG. 126.—MAHOGANY EASY-CHAIR. Height, 4 feet; width, 2 feet 6 inches. Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

it is the best chamber, all furnished with crimson velvet, and on each compartment a gilt eagle holds in his mouth a golden horn, the arms of the family, they are in bas-relief either of thick paper or pasteboard. There are several fine tables of green Silician marble and Oriental flowered alabaster.'

Of this same gentleman's house at Hammersmith, he says :—

'He has new model'd it in a very elegant taste, and 'tis finely furnished ; but the gallery, which is the length of the house, is a very beautiful piece of architecture of the Ionic order ; there is a Venetian window at each end, and two windows on each side of an arcade, supported by two fine pillars of Italian marble ; in this arcade is a statue of Flora, and in a niche on each side a statue with bronze groups over them ; on each side of the arcade and the Venetian windows are busts on terms, with bronze groups likewise over them. Between the windows are statues, as well as between the looking-glass opposite to the windows. At each end is a column with a vase on them of Oriental alabaster, and one of the pillars is of the same finereed, the other of some very fine marble. The pillars of the door at entrance are of lapis-lazuli finereed, which cost four shillings an ounce ; the whole is paved with fine marbles in beautiful figures.'

This style of apartment clearly would not have been suitable for mahogany furniture, and held at the most a few sofas and chairs which would probably have been gilt Italian. The gilt mahogany furniture referred to by the Bishop was exceptional, and for this reason, no doubt, attracted his attention.

The very elegant china-cupboard (fig. 127) is one of a pair, and represents a specimen of this gilt mahogany furniture. The carving throughout, with the exception of the feet, is gilt, the pediment is lightly decorated with a string of carved moulding, and the framings to the doors are of scalloped and undulating form, edged with a carved roping ; the transoms of the front and sides do not correspond in line, and the effect produced is charming and original. The base opens in three drawers, mounted with elaborate handles in the French taste ; the legs are gracefully curved and decorated on the shoulders in the same manner. The date of this cabinet is about 1745, before the appearance of the *Director*, and is an early example of the china-cabinet treated as an elegant piece of furniture.

Chests of drawers throughout the earlier part of this century presented no great novelties in form ; the general proportions of the walnut and marqueterie types were maintained, but towards 1750 the fronts and



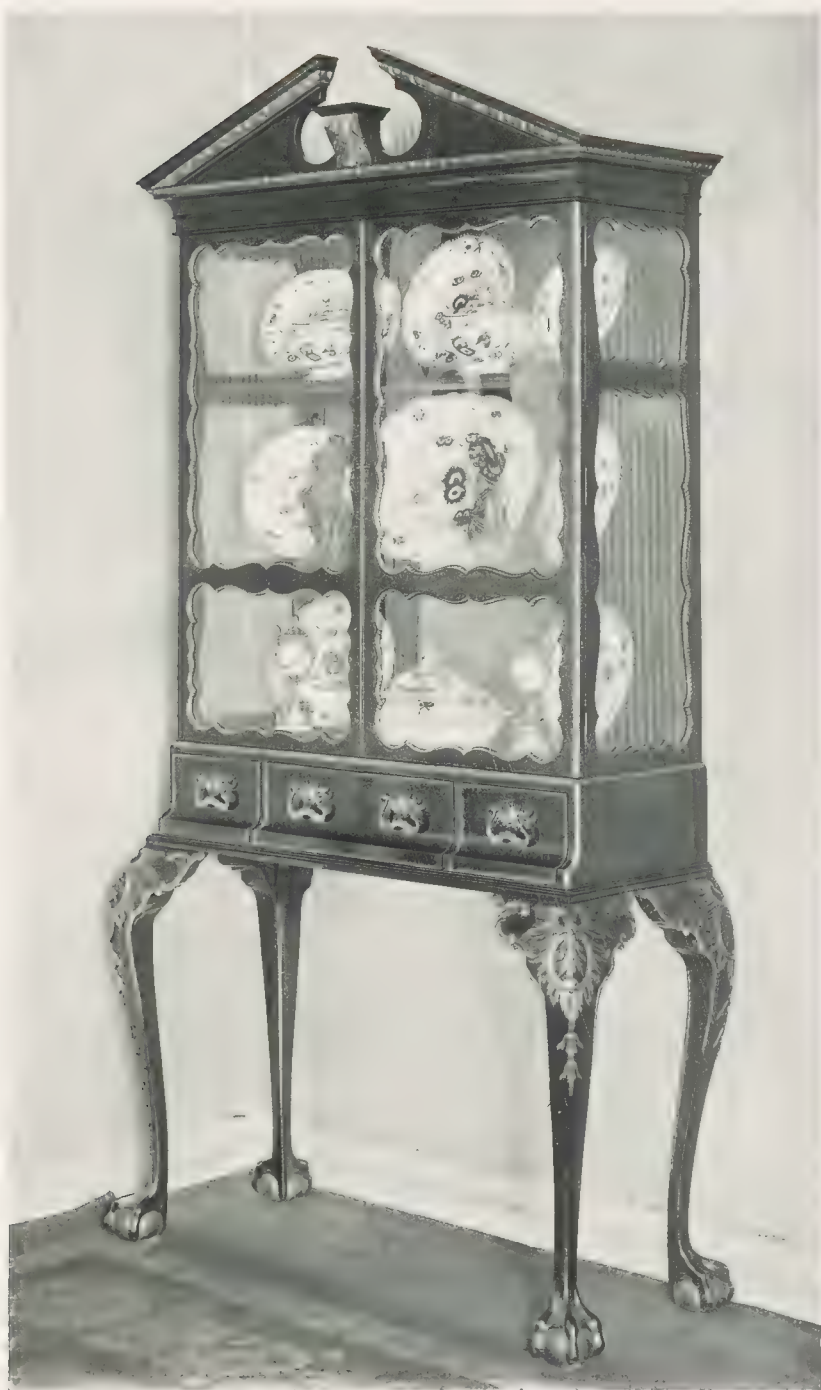


FIG. 127. MAHOGANY AND GILT CHINA-CABINET.  
Height, 6 feet 9 inches ; width, 3 feet 6 inches ; depth, 1 foot 9 inches.  
Property of H. OATWAY, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

sides were frequently serpentine in shape, and a separate stand to the rest of the piece was discarded in favour of a permanently fixed base. Fig. 128 is a chest of drawers of about 1740, dependent for decoration on elaborate handles and key-plates, and a stand which somewhat resembles in style the Longford settees (fig. 60). The framing and cockbeading of the drawers are simple; a very strong French feeling is visible in the English brass-work, but the stand retains all the characteristics of native design. The piece is made of light-coloured rosewood, much valued at



FIG. 128.—ROSEWOOD CHEST OF DRAWERS. Height, 3 feet 6 inches; length, 3 feet 6 inches.  
Property of H. OATWAY, Esq.





FIG. 129.—MAHOGANY CHEST OF DRAWERS. Property of VISCOUNT ENFIELD.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

this time. In fig. 129, of about 1750, the sides and front are serpentine, the corners being faced with pilasters, carved with decoration of a Louis xv. character in high relief; these are headed by brackets of scrolled acanthus form. The cornice, base, and intersections of the drawers are boldly carved in classical and rose and ribbon mouldings; the feet of bracket form are adapted from those found on Chinese bronzes, the brass handles and key-plates are of delicate and beautiful design in the French taste, and the mahogany with which the drawers and top are veneered is of the grain known as fiddle-back.



FIG. 130.—ROSEWOOD CHEST OF DRAWERS. Height, 3 feet 4 inches; length, 4 feet 4 inches; depth, 2 feet 4 inches. Property of JOHN G. GRIFFITHS, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

In fig. 130 can be seen another fine specimen, made of rosewood. The front and sides serpentine in bold curves, the corners finishing in scrolls with whorled ends supported by richly carved pilasters. The chest is divided into three drawers constructed of deal, but faced with solid rosewood; the lower portion is in the form of a stand on ball and claw feet, united to the frame with broad shoulders, and decorated in the same style as the pilasters. The front and sides droop at the centre in pendants, and are carved from the solid, with very bold shelled scrolls, showing a largeness of touch rarely found at this period, when all carving was



FIG. 131.—MAHOGANY CHEST OF DRAWERS. Length, 4 feet; height, 3 feet 4 inches.  
Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

usually applied. The brass handles and key-plates are particularly beautiful, being in the same large character as the rest of the piece; they are admirable in their finish and interesting as repeating the design and exactly following the extreme curves of the front. The piece unfortunately has been cut at some time in order to convert the two lower drawers into a cupboard; the weight and hardness of the wood is remarkable.

It is comparatively rare to find carving round the edges of drawers on these chests, but in fig. 131 a fine bead and reel moulding is introduced as a cockbeading. This piece is small, with a serpentine front of elegant proportions, and has a writing-slide between the top and second drawers. The inside cabinet work of these pieces of furniture is generally



FIG. 132.—MAHOGANY CHEST OF DRAWERS. Length, 4 feet 2 inches; height, 2 feet 10 inches.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

fine ; the drawers are usually found of oak, mahogany fronted, in some special instances of cedar ; but the carcase, as in earlier walnut chests of drawers, is almost always of deal, and of so well-selected and seasoned wood, that the drawers still travel perfectly on their runners. It is a wise precaution before buying a piece of antique mahogany furniture containing drawers, to carefully test their fit ; these should never be too tight, for wood contracts with age and does not expand. Few elaborate mahogany chests of drawers were made at this period by inferior firms, and so the wood will almost always be found well chosen. Fig. 132 is a large specimen, also about 1750, the top and bottom carved with acanthus moulding, and



FIG. 133.—MAHOGANY CHEST OF DRAWERS. Height, 2 feet 10 inches ; length, 4 feet 3 inches ; depth, 2 feet. Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the corners ornamented with wreathed and reeded pilasters terminating in scrolls ; the feet are of unusual size, covered with a somewhat meaningless design in low relief ; the handles and key-plates, of distinctly French taste, form an agreeable contrast to the plain face of the drawers ; the mahogany is finely clouded and retains its original colour of warm cinnamon. In fig. 133 the surface of the entire chest is perfectly plain, but the piece is mounted upon a gilt stand with legs of rococo ornamentation found on mirrors and sconces at the middle of the eighteenth century. The frieze of this stand is carved with a diagonal strapwork and cleverly connects the severity of the chest with the elaborate detailed feet. A chest of this kind was designed to carry some smaller form of cabinet or large china vases. In the present instance, this particular chest bears a



FIG. 134.—MAHOGANY CHEST OF DRAWERS. Property of RICHARD A. CANFIELD, Esq



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

glass case containing one of the shirts in which Charles I. was executed, and which was given to his devoted adherent, the Marquis of Worcester, immediately after the King's death. It is shown later in fig. 141. Fig. 134 represents a very elaborate chest of drawers shaped on the lines of a French commode of this period. It has a double serpentine front in three divisions, divided by pilasters carved with pendants of flowers in high relief. The nine drawers are edged with a roped cockbeading, and the brass handles are of English workmanship in the style of Louis xv.,



FIG. 135.—MAHOGANY DRESSING-COMMODE. Length, 3 feet 6 inches; height, 2 feet 8 inches; depth, 1 foot 10 inches. Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the corners bow outwards in bold shoulders of rococo design, and are supported on somewhat slender C scrolled legs connected by an elaborate base, the whole effect being distinctly florid, although the scale of decoration is imposing. Its date is about 1755, and it much resembles the design for a somewhat similar commode in the *Director*.

Occasionally the French taste was adopted without any attempt at our native style, and the many examples in illustrated furniture books of the time prove this. Such a piece as Plate x. is of this character. The long, low sweep of this commode is unusual, and the supports take the form of legs and not feet; the finish of the metal-work cannot compete with that of France, but the piece is full of life, and the proportions are simple and pleasing. Chippendale calls these chest of drawers 'commode tables,' and gives an example in the third edition of his book; in the description of it he says, 'The ornaments, parts, are intended for brass-work, which I advise should be modelled in wax and then cast from these models.'

A smaller piece (such as Chippendale calls a dressing commode), far more restrained in taste, and purely English in style, made of dark Cuban wood, is fig. 135. The front is divided into two cupboards, two small drawers and three larger, the latter being bow-fronted. It stands upon bowed legs exactly corresponding in form to those found supporting Chinese and Japanese bronzes; the only decorations to the piece are the beautiful handles and key-plates of English brass-work. Double chests of drawers (or tallboys) were still much used, and continued to be made until late in the eighteenth century, when the hanging wardrobe and press with sliding shelves superseded this somewhat inconvenient form of furniture. Fig. 136 is a neat and well-finished example, with the gradation between the upper and lower portions more marked than is usually found. The cornice and corners are enriched with delicate carving; the drawers are deep and the plinth is plain, supported on the broad and decorated Chinese legs peculiar to the middle of the century. These double chests







PLATE X (AGE OF MAHOGANY)  
MAHOGANY COMMODE

HEIGHT, 29 INCHES  
WIDTH, 49 "  
DEPTH, 24 "

PROPERTY OF  
H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

of drawers were probably used for coats and dresses, as hanging cupboards of mahogany were rare, and even the *sacque* without its hoop would have gone into a comparatively small compass.



FIG. 136.—MAHOGANY DOUBLE CHEST OF DRAWERS.  
Height, 6 feet; length, 4 feet. Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.

Fig. 137 is an early example of a mahogany hanging wardrobe. The cornice, with its Gothic upper members, is surmounted by a fretwork cresting of scrolled design, much resembling that found on the testers of contemporary beds; the doors, which open the whole height of the cupboard, are of fine clouded mahogany, panelled with mouldings of serpentine and oblong form; the legs resemble those found on chests of drawers.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, clothes cupboards forming part of the deal panelling of the rooms had taken the place of the rather cumbersome oaken wardrobes; no walnut hanging wardrobes appear to have been constructed, and so an hiatus must have arisen in this



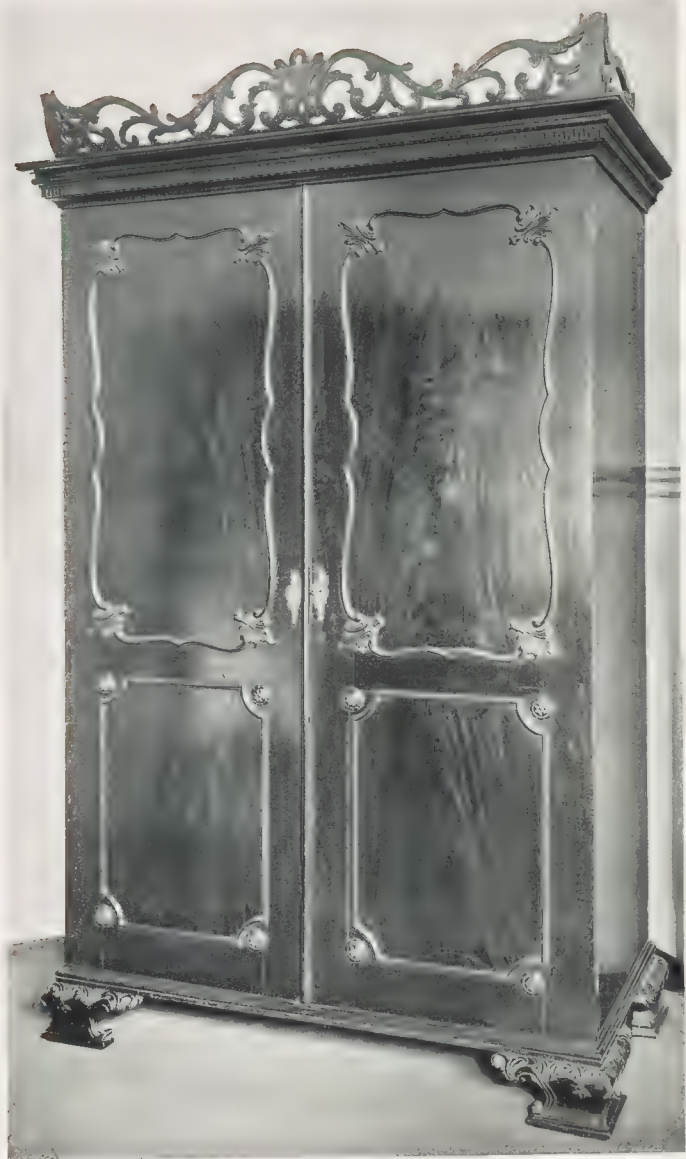


FIG. 137.—MAHOGANY HANGING WARDROBE. Height, 7 feet; length, 4 feet.  
Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.





FIG. 138.—MAHOGANY CLOTHES-PRESS. Height, 6 feet 10 inches ; length, 4 feet 2 inches.  
Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.





FIG. 139.—MAHOGANY CLOTHES-PRESS. Height, 6 feet 8 inches; width, 4 feet 2 inches.  
Property of VISCOUNT ENFIELD.





FIG. 140.—MAHOGANY CLOTHES-PRESS. Height, 6 feet 10 inches; length, 4 feet 2 inches.  
Property of H. H. MULLINER, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

kind of furniture, until the use of mahogany for large articles became universal. The walnut cupboard with shelves, called at the time 'commode cloths-press,' had been in much demand during the reign of Anne and George I., and this shape continued to be made in mahogany, of which fig. 138 is a simple and well-proportioned specimen, about the date 1760. A rather earlier press, somewhat different in construction, is shown in fig. 139; here the drawers in the lower portion are enclosed by two doors. The design and execution of this press is very fine in quality, and the decorated and serpentine mouldings forming the panels are in bold but admirable proportion to the piece. In fig. 140 the same intention of construction is preserved, but here the lower portion takes the form of a chest of drawers; the cresting at the top is a Chinese railing with finials of the same style, whilst the large panels are framed in a delicate serpentine moulding with corners of French design; the handle plates are elaborate, finishing in little pagoda roofs; the feet are full of character, being octagonal in section.



FIG. 141.—SHIRT OF KING CHARLES I. Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



## CHAPTER V



WE now arrive at the period of mahogany furniture that was the outcome of the books of designs published by Chippendale in 1754, by Matthias Darly, an architect and friend of Chippendale's in the same year, and by Sir William Chambers, who, on his return to England from his studies abroad, published a book on Chinese architecture and decoration in 1757. The designs in these books embrace three separate styles, known as the French, the Chinese, and the Gothic. Our so-called French style differed from the corresponding period of Louis xv., chiefly in the absence of the finely chased and gilt metal fittings at the sides and corners; the gilding of the wood-work and the beautiful tapestry coverings; and its development here was principally confined to mirrors, sofas, and chairs. The Chinese style was perhaps the most consistent of the three, as one apparent motive was preserved throughout; the principal characteristics were an open lattice-work, termed at the time a Chinese railing, pagoda roofs with bells as pendants, and in the mirrors and sconces, the introduction of mandarins, Chinese birds, and little buildings among the decoration. The so-called Gothic was an attempt to introduce certain elements of that ancient taste, combined with later Georgian delicacy and lightness of construction; but the result was unconvincing and unsatisfactory. Occasionally these styles were interwoven, affording curious opportunities to the carver for eccentricity of design.

Chinese taste, which had to some extent died down, was strongly revived about 1750, and the great quantity of curios and porcelain imported from the East was found to demand a particular setting.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

Towards the end of George II.'s reign, the mania of collecting had widely spread, and the fashion increased for crowding the rooms and galleries of houses with china ornaments of every description. Over windows, doors, and chimney-pieces and every other possible projection in a room, vases, basins, grotesque monsters, and figures were displayed. Richardson described Sir Charles Grandison as having a fine arrangement of china in the state-rooms at Grandison Hall. In the earlier days of the mania Addison, writing in the *Lover and Reader*, said :—

‘There is no inclination in women that more surprises me than their passion for china. When a woman is visited with it, it generally takes possession of her for life. The common way of purchasing such articles, if I may believe my female informers, is by exchanging old suits of clothes for this brittle ware. For this reason my friend Tradewell, in the city, calls his great room that is nobly furnished out with china, his wife’s wardrobe. In yonder corner, says he, are about twenty suits of clothes, and on that scrutoire, above, one hundred yards of furbelowed silk. You cannot imagine how many nightgowns, stays, and manteaus went to the raising of that pyramid, so that in reality this is but a dextrous way of picking the husband’s pocket; who is often purchasing a great vase of china, when he fancies that he is buying a fine head or a silk gown for his wife.’

It was doubtless soon found advisable to secure the smaller and more valuable curios against theft and breakage by placing them in cabinets. These were at first of walnut or lacquer, with solid doors, although it has already been shown that attempts at glass-fronted cupboards were made towards the end of the seventeenth century. The lightness and strength of mahogany enabled the craftsman to easily construct a cabinet with glazed doors of decorative design, and so to well display its contents. In many instances these were used to contain books as well as china and curios, though no doubt in houses of importance where there was a library, books were confined to the shelves and cases of this room and not distributed about in cabinets.

Fig. 142 is a combination of writing-bureau and book-case, for here the framing to the doors is too wide and the glazed portion too small for the exhibition of china. The cornice is surmounted by an openwork





FIG. 142.—MAHOGANY BUREAU AND BOOK-CASE. Height, 7 feet 4 inches ;  
length, 3 feet 8 inches. Property of MESSRS. MORANT.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

pediment of French design, for after the appearance of *The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director*, a perforated pediment to cabinets took the place of the previous more solid and triangular structure ; but the cornice is purely classical. Pendants of flowers carved in high relief are applied on the doors, which are supported on two drawers faced with a geometrical pattern of Chinese taste in the style known as card-cutting. The lower portion of this handsome and solid example consists of a cupboard and drawers, the top edged with a well-carved gadrooned border ; the feet are double, and show signs of decadence in design, for the piece belongs to the end of a style, and is by no means original in motive. The date is about 1750.

Another specimen of this same date, formerly in the possession of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, is fig. 143. This is distinctly a china-cupboard. The glazed doors, bordered with a rosette and ribbon banding, are unusually large ; the treatment of the stand, with its swags and festoons of delicately carved flowers and fruit in full relief, on straight Chinese legs, is original and beautiful. On the headings of these are escutcheons, bearing the arms of the Faulkner family, the original owners of the piece. Fig. 144 is probably a door to a recessed cupboard in a wall, to correspond with other wood-work of a room ; the carving of the architrave is illustrative of the extreme delicacy of execution shown in the best work of this time. Fig. 145 is another book-case, on account of its great depth probably made to fit a particular recess. This exact design is given in the *Director*, plate lxxxix. The upper portion is in three compartments, of so-called Gothic, the style is not repeated in the lower portion, which is surmounted by a deep cornice beautifully splayed and carved in a lattice pattern. This lower portion opens in four doors, enclosing a series of small drawers with handsome brass handles. The plinth is very solid and plain, save for an acanthus heading.

It has been far too much the custom to attribute pieces of furniture corresponding in design to examples in Chippendale's book to that





FIG. 143.—MAHOGANY CHINA-CUPBOARD.  
Property of SIDNEY LETTS, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE



FIG. 144.—MAHOGANY CUPBOARD. Height, 8 feet 7 inches ; width, 3 feet 4 inches. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.

master or his firm. A very large number of subscribers to the work were cabinet-makers of the time, who purchased the book solely for practical purposes, in order to reproduce the designs, and these reproductions were at times so accurate that it is difficult to decide their origin without contemporary evidence. Peculiarity of touch in carving can in many instances be assigned to an individual firm, but perhaps undue importance has been given to the rather unimportant detail of tracing furniture to any one maker. Collectors of the Chippendale period are very apt to mentally cast doubts on the authenticity of a piece that does not exactly conform to the idiosyncrasies of the particular makers who have come under their notice, but it is unwise to be too freely prejudiced by unfamiliar details, or to accept even the want of surface abrasion as a proof of modern forgery. In some of this old mahogany furniture that has never been moved from its original position





FIG. 145. MAHOGANY BOOK-CASE. Height, 7 feet 2 inches; length, 5 feet; depth, 2 feet 1 inch.  
Property of MESSRS. ISAACS.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the surface is not always 'silky,' and the colour is sometimes found like



FIG. 146. -MAHOGANY BUREAU AND CHINA-CUPBOARD. Height, 8 feet; width, 4 feet 2 inches; depth, 1 foot 10 inches. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.

modern mahogany which has been wax-polished only. It has been possible, through the great kindness of the owners, to see specimens of Chippendale's furniture in their original positions. At Nostell Priory there is a library writing-table, so sharp and new-looking in all detail and colour, that without *primâ facie* evidence many well-informed enthusiasts might doubt its authenticity; but this particular table was made for the room in which it now stands, it is introduced with the side of the room as a background in a family group painted about that time, and Thomas Chippendale's bill, dated 1766, in which the item of the table occurs, has always been preserved in one of the drawers.

Cheaper reproductions began to be fashionable at this time for those who were not able to afford Chippendale's prices, and many were produced and made their appearance in the Strand shops and at auction. The interest taken in the sale of furniture



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

and curios even attracted the attention of foreigners, and a Frenchman, Monsieur Grosley, who wrote a book on his tour to London in 1765, said :—

‘The finest shops are scattered up and down the courts and passages. The grand company which they draw together, the elegant arrangement and parade made by the shops, whether in stuffs exposed to sell, fine furniture, and things of taste, or the girls belonging to them, would be motive sufficient to determine those that walk, to make that their way in preference to any other. Even if they had not neatness and security to recommend them, the shops in the Strand, Fleet Street, Cheapside, etc., are the most striking objects that London can offer to the eye of a stranger. They are all enclosed with great glass doors, all adorned on the outside with pieces of ancient architecture, the more absurd, as they are likely to be spoilt by constant use ; all brilliant and gay, as well on account of the things sold in them, as the exact order in which they are kept, so that they make a most splendid show, greatly superior to anything of the kind in Paris. The sad, gloomy air which smoke gives to buildings is one of the least injuries it does them ; the inside of public buildings and of the houses is equally hurt by the most volatile, penetrating, and corrosive parts of the smoke. The furniture of houses, generally speaking, consists of large chairs, the seats of which are in part stuffed up very full and covered with morocco leather ; and partly of mahogany tables. With regard to the walls, they are hung with cloth or printed paper, by those who are not satisfied with plain wainscot. As for the beds, they are made of stuffs more solid than brilliant, and which require to be frequently renewed if people prefer show to solidity. The humid and dark air which



FIG. 147.—MAHOGANY BUREAU AND BOOK-CASE.  
Height, 7 feet 6 inches ; width, 3 feet 9 inches.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.





FIG. 148.—MAHOGANY BOOK-CASE. Height, 8 feet 4 inches; length, 4 feet 10 inches; depth, 1 foot 6 inches. Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



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enwraps London requires the greatest cleanliness imaginable, and in this respect the inhabitants of that city seem to vie with the Hollanders. The plate, hearthstones, moveables, apartments, doors, stairs, the very street doors, their locks, and the large brass knockers, are every day washed, scoured, or rubbed. Even in the lodging-houses, the middle of the stairs is often covered with carpeting to prevent them from being soiled. All the apartments in the houses have mats or carpets; and the use of them has been adopted some years since by the French.'

No doubt, as Monsieur Grosley wrote, tables and chairs were the principal items of furniture in the rooms, but it is curious that he should have omitted to notice the book-cases and china-cupboards, which were so largely on the increase at this time. Another show-cupboard, with Gothic motive in the arrangement of glazing, is shown in fig. 146. Here the pediment is a new departure, the C scrolls swooping upwards, being clothed on the outer edge with acanthus foliage, and perforated with Chinese fretwork; the hollow of the cornice is most delicately carved with an acanthus and flower divided by a waved line, an interesting adaptation of the lotus border, and a pattern seldom found on furniture. The lower portion of this piece is of bureau form, opening with a flap on a charming arcade of pigeon-holes, with perforated spandrels on either side of two classical pilasters, enclosing the usual looking-glass and secret drawers, but in this instance approached by a small flight of steps. Secret drawers, more or less in the same places, exist in almost all the scrutoires of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

It appears certain that Chippendale and his followers adapted their work to the requirements of their clients' rooms and decoration, and therefore produced furniture of classical, French, Chinese, and Gothic designs to suit different locations. The cabinet (fig. 147) with looking-glass panels, of about the date 1755, but rather earlier in style, is severe in taste. In this instance the pediment is classical, but the fascia is perforated lattice-work, centring in the crown and feathers of the Prince of Wales. As the date of this cabinet is before 1760,



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it may possibly have been made for George III. before he came to the throne. The framing to the doors is covered with a Chinese card-cut lattice-work, contained within two Corinthian columns; the lower portion of the piece is perfectly plain. This severe Chinese treatment is found again in the combined china-cabinet and book-case (fig. 148), belonging to the Duke of Beaufort, in which the wings are unglazed and covered with the original brass wire-netting for books, the glazed centre compartment being for china; the lattice-work frieze is perforated, but the lattice pilasters on either side of the centre opening are backed with looking-glass, and the same motive is carried out in the lower portion of the piece, producing a pleasing uniformity of design. At this period many instances occur of superfluity in ornament, but on careful examination, certain plain surfaces will always be found left to give proper value to the broken details of the carving. It is by the intellectual distribution of this activity and repose in decoration that the doubtful buyer should be guided, for simplicity is one of the many pitfalls to the forger, and a redundancy of ornament may often cover a multitude of sins. In the large and handsome cabinet or book-case in three compartments (fig. 149), the scrolled and lattice pediment centres in a basket with flowers and two doves; the frieze to the cornice is perforated in a Chinese motive, the six doors are simple in treatment; the upper and lower portions of the piece are separated by a shelf, edged with a finely gadrooned moulding, and it is only the brass handles and key-plates to the doors that are ornate, and cleverly relieve what would otherwise be far too great an expanse of simplicity.

The unusually fine cabinet given in Plate XI. was probably made by the firm of Chippendale between 1750 and 1760, and is a masterpiece in construction, design, and execution. The motive is Chinese, and the beauty of the undulating lines of the front is only equalled by the perfection of the veneer and the tasteful arrangement of the woods







PLATE XI (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

AMBOYNA AND ROSEWOOD CABINET

HEIGHT, 8 FEET 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  INCHES

DEPTH, 1 FOOT 8 "

LENGTH, 6 FEET 4 "

PROPERTY OF

H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.













FIG. 149.—MAHOGANY BOOK-CASE. Length, 10 feet 3 inches; height, 10 feet.  
Property of E. H. CUTHBERTSON, Esq.



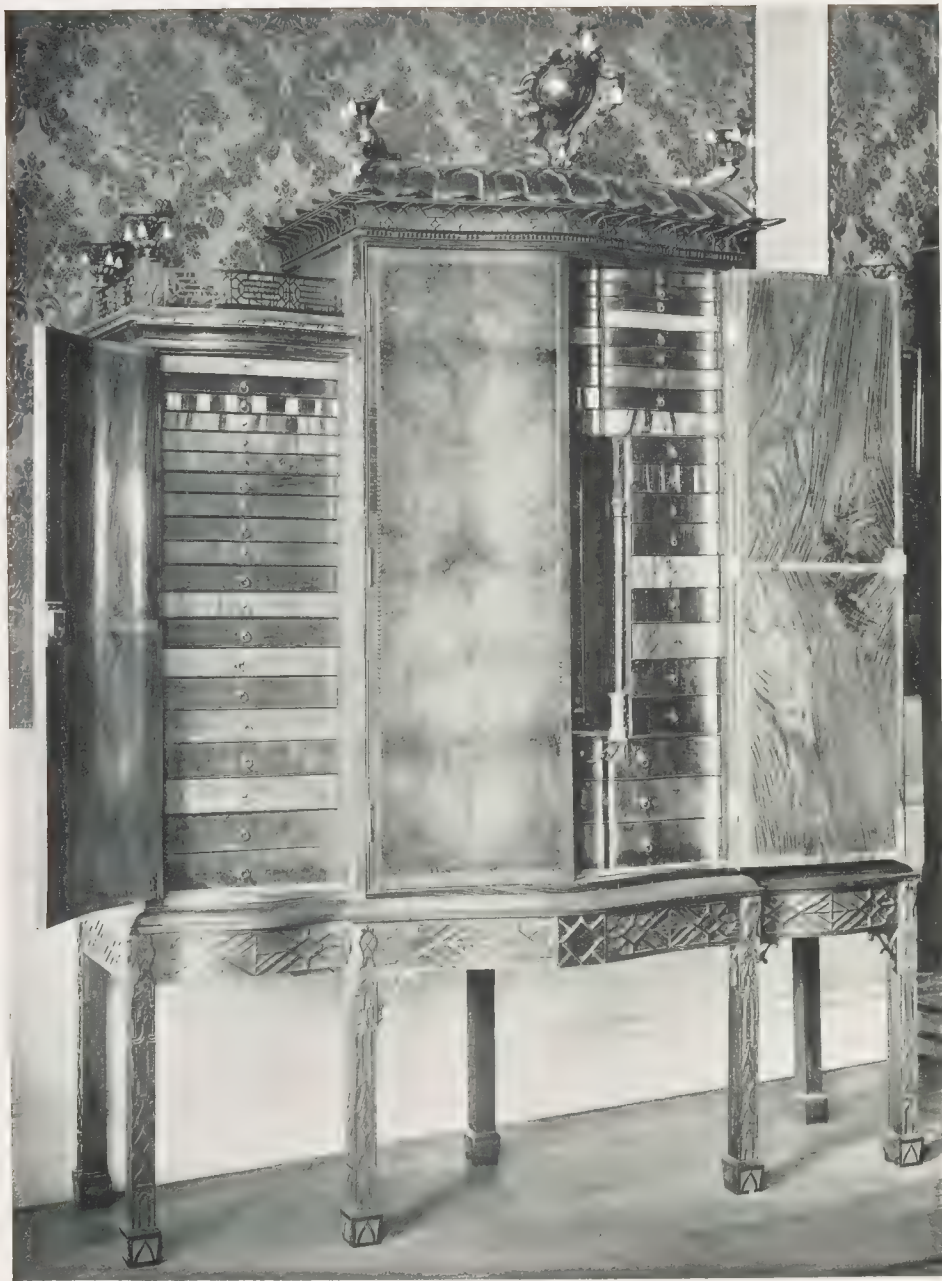


FIG. 150.—INSIDE OF CABINET. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

employed. The centre compartment rises in a dark rosewood roof of pagoda form, supporting an escutcheon and two candle-branches hung with ivory bells; the doors are veneered on the outside with fine amboyna wood, bordered in light rosewood, inlaid with a herring-boning of ebony and holly, the insides being veneered with plain panels of light rosewood; these doors open on a series of ninety-three drawers, faced with walnut, mahogany, amboyna, satin, laburnum, rose and other woods; in the centre is a recess, framed in two cluster columns set angleways, and backed by looking-glass; the wings are surmounted by a Chinese railing on a cornice composed of nine members; candle-holders, hung with ivory bells, forming pendants. The stand is of dark rosewood, decorated on the outer surfaces with a card-cut lattice-work in Chinese taste. There is a design for a cabinet of this description in the *Director*; the example given here was probably made for a wealthy botanical collector. Fig. 150 is a view of the same cabinet with open doors, to show the arrangement of the drawers.

Fig. 151 is a china-cabinet with a perforated lattice pediment of purely Chinese feeling; the glazing to the doors, the frieze to the lower portion and the feet, corresponding in taste. Such a cabinet would have been used for either books or china. The following letter from Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes, written in 1746, speaks of this Oriental taste:

‘We got to Cornbury, where we were expected, and immediately conveyed into the apartment allotted for us, which is so neat and so elegant that I never saw anything equal to it. It consists of two large rooms and a bedchamber; the finest room is hung with flowered paper of grotesque pattern, the next room is hung with the finest Indian paper of flowers and all sorts of birds; the ceilings are all ornamented in the Indian taste; the frames of the glass and all the furnishing of the room are well suited; the bedchamber is also hung with Indian paper on a gold ground, and the bed is Indian work of silks and gold on white satin.’

Fig. 152 is a china-cupboard of rare form and high finish, of about 1760. The pediment rises in the tall scrolls of this period, and is





FIG. 151.—MAHOGANY CHINA-CUPBOARD. Height, 8 feet; length, 4 feet 4 inches.  
Property of LORD DE LISLE AND DUDLEY.





FIG. 152.—MAHOGANY CHINA-CABINET. Height, 8 feet 6 inches; length, 4 feet 9 inches.  
Property of VISCOUNT ENFIELD.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

perforated in simple curved trellis; the hollow frieze is decorated with a series of the small pointed pendants that obtained such fashion on later cabinets, and the ornament on the framing of the doors is confined to carved pendants and borders of flowers. The divisions of the glazing are large; the lower portion forms a stand, headed by a well-carved moulding, the centre of the frame being decorated with a pendant formed

of a shell between sprays of acanthus; the legs are of ball and claw shape, late in style. It may be well here to repeat that all carving on the flat surfaces of mahogany furniture of this period is applied; it is only upon the mouldings, the legs of chairs and tables, and the backs of chairs that decoration is cut out of the solid. A cabinet consisting entirely of drawers for papers, etc., is shown in fig. 153. In this specimen both pediment and cornice are perforated and represent the only decoration. The small drawers are enclosed by doors, and each is numbered.

Fig. 154, although leaning towards a later taste, must be classified with the



FIG. 153.—MAHOGANY CABINET. Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.





FIG. 154.—MAHOGANY CABINET. Height, 5 feet 8 inches ; length, 4 feet ; depth, 1 foot 9 inches.  
Property of WEEDON GROSSMITH, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

foregoing cabinets. In this case the glazed compartment is small, with drawers on either side; the cupboards open in cusped form; the lower portion of the piece is well in projection, taking the form of a chest with drawers standing on rather tall bowed feet; the handle-plates, which are original, point to a date about 1765, and are early examples of the solid plate, which fashion was revived about this time. The colour of the wood is exceedingly good. This form is classed by Chippendale as a 'dressing-chest and book-case.'



FIG. 155.—MAHOGANY AND GILT WRITING-TABLE,  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLET AND SON.



## CHAPTER VI



LIBRARY writing-tables have already been given in illustration, but after 1750 these were regarded as important pieces of furniture, and much care was bestowed on them. Their decoration was in accordance with the fashion, and their shape varied little. Fig. 155 is French in type and rather before 1750. It is remarkable for its simplicity, depending for charm upon proportion and undulation of line, even the top and bottom mouldings being uncarved. The only decorations are the gilt and carved borders of the long serpentine panels, the stringing, and the well-curved feet. The top is covered with leather, no key-plates or handles are introduced; the mahogany is light in colour, having only been waxed. Furniture of this particular character is rare, and was probably the taste of one particular firm. The commode dressing-table (fig. 156) is probably made by the same hand, the characteristics exactly resembling the last specimen. The same gilding round the lozenge-shaped panels, and the simplicity of the mouldings, would infer that these two pieces of furniture were made for one room. The legs are delicate, set in wide at the shoulder, and carved with cabochon and acanthus, terminating in scrolled feet. The whole effect is reminiscent of a French country-piece in oak of about the same time. Plate XII. shows a highly finished library-table, also about 1755, and is an undoubted instance of Chippendale's work. The design appears in plate lxxxv. of the *Director*, and the workmanship is of the peculiar-finished character of that firm, though in this specimen the mouldings differ slightly from the design and are decorated. The frieze that surrounds the top is a fine card-cut lattice in Chinese taste; the eight panels, with their cluster columns, composing the lower portion of the piece, show almost every variety of Chippendale's design.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

There is not space here to justify a further explanation of the plan and setting out of this carefully considered example. A reference to the above plate in the *Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director* may surprise a reader unacquainted with technical details of cabinet-making. On the back of this table—or rather the portion intended to stand out in the room (fig. 157)—ornately carved panels are introduced, with carved Gothic octofoils, headed by garrya sprays. The carving on this remarkable piece is as sharp as metal-work, being equal in directness of execution to the bronze and marble of the Italian Renaissance. These fine tables, even at the time of their manufacture, were expensive; the

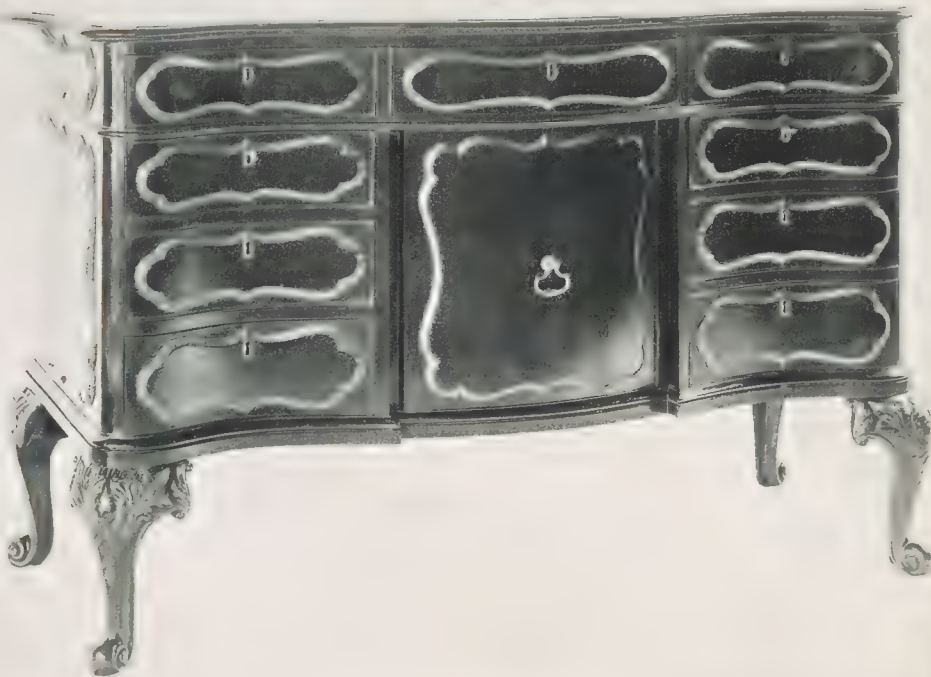


FIG. 156. —MAHOGANY AND GILT COMMODO.  
Property of H. H. MULLINER, Esq.







PLATE XII (AGE OF MAHOGANY)  
MAHOGANY WRITING-TABLE

HEIGHT, 2 FEET 8 INCHES

LENGTH, 5 "  $2\frac{1}{2}$  "

DEPTH, 2 "  $11\frac{1}{2}$  "

PROPERTY OF

H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

wood was of the choicest, and none but the best craftsmen were employed. Fig. 158 is another specimen in the possession of Lord St. Oswald, made by Chippendale for the library at Nostell Priory, and delivered there, June 1767. The bill for it lies always in one of the drawers, the detail referring to the table being as follows :—

‘To a large mahogany library table, of very fine wood, with doors on each side of the bottom part and drawers within on one side and partitions on the other, with terms to ditto carved and ornamented with Lions’ heads and paws, with carved ovals in pannels of the doors, and the top covered with black leather, and the whole compleatly finished in the most elegant taste, £72, 10s.’

This was equivalent to quite £200 of our money at the present time, though the value of the table now is certainly over £2000. The



FIG. 157.—BACK OF WRITING-TABLE. (PLATE XII.)  
Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.





FIG. 158.—MAHOGANY LIBRARY-TABLE. Length, 6 feet 6 inches; width, 4 feet; height, 2 feet 7 inches. Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.

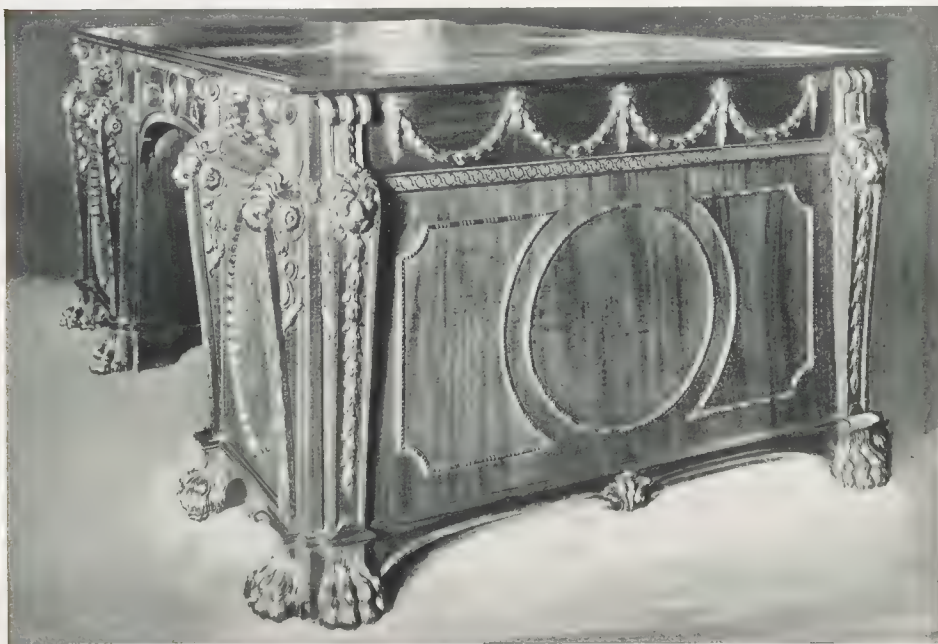


FIG. 159. —END OF TABLE SHOWN IN FIG. 158.



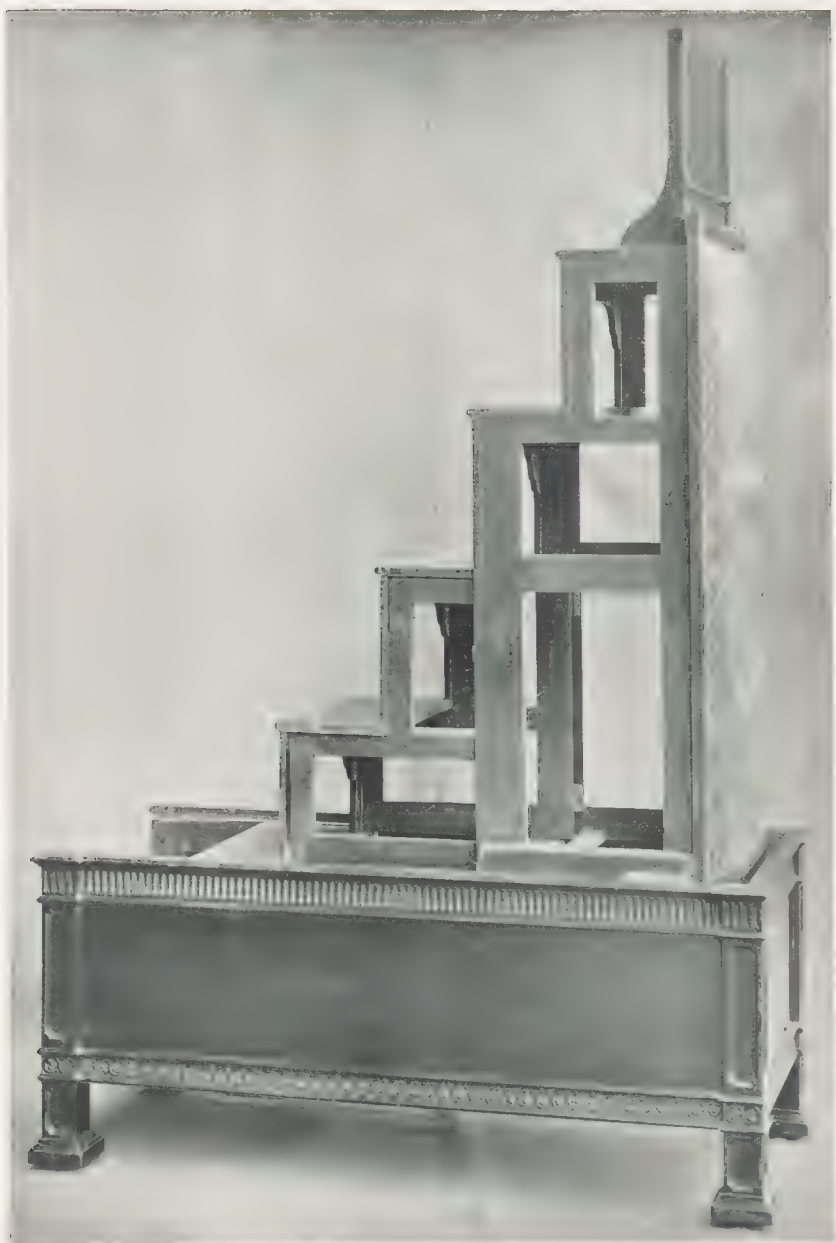


FIG. 160.—MAHOGANY LIBRARY STEPS. Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

design was probably by the brothers Adam, who, in conjunction with Chippendale, decorated the house and made much of the furniture. The piece is unique, as representing furniture in its original condition exactly as it left Chippendale's workshops, for not a panel has started, not a moulding has moved, and the carving is like wax-modelling by a skilful sculptor. The back and front of this table are treated alike; fig. 159 shows one of the sides. This bill of Chippendale's is of great interest, and eight of the pages are given (figs. 163 to 170). It is in sheets, foolscap size, sewn together, and includes a period from June 1766 to December 1770, and a sum of £1581, 8s. spent in upholstery. Other examples mentioned in this bill will be given later.

In the same room as the table there are some library steps (fig. 160) of ingenious construction, which fold up into a box, carved in a severe Adam design. Another library book-table, of about 1765, is fig. 161, from Badminton; the front and back are both partitioned for the reception of the large folios, so much the fashion at this time. The corners and centre compartment are flanked with finely designed terms, headed with lions' masks, each holding a loose brass ring; these are headed by a richly carved cornice, standing on a bold plinth. The colour, style, and execution of this piece much resembles the table by Chippendale at Nostell Priory, but it is useless to attempt to assign furniture to an individual maker, unless there are some very characteristic points of resemblance, or proved by document that it came from a particular workshop. It is impossible that Chippendale's firm could have made a tithe of the furniture assigned to them, though from 1750 to 1780 he was the fashionable cabinet-maker and upholsterer of his time, and there is but little doubt that he made all the best and most expensive furniture, and was employed by the richest classes both for their town and country houses. The bill at Nostell Priory includes various and quite ordinary forms of upholstery, in detail much resembling a modern account of the same kind. Among the items are forty-





FIG. 161.—MAHOGANY BOOK-TABLE. Length, 3 feet 4 inches; width, 4 feet, height, 2 feet 8 inches.  
Property of the Duke of Beaufort.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE



FIG. 162.—TULIP WOOD BAROMETER CASE.  
Height, 4 feet; width, 1 foot 4 inches.  
Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.

one picture-frames, that still hang in the house; they are very small in size, and simply carved. These frames in all amount to £98, 10s.—nearly £200 of our money. There is a charge also of £34, 10s. (£69) for a frame to a picture of Cleopatra, which is a large price for a picture-frame, but it must be remembered that the reputation of this firm had been founded in the reign of George 1. for looking-glasses and picture-frames. Again, on the 20th October 1769, there is £25 charged for a barometer case, described ‘as a very neat case for a Barometer with richly carved ornaments.’ It is shown in fig. 162, and is certainly of high finish, being inlaid with tulip wood and ebony, with a gilt cresting, gilt satyr terminals, and gilt base; but £50 would be considered a large price in the present day to give for a barometer case. In this interesting bill the cost of ordinary furniture compares favourably with that of modern manufacture, but directly a piece became at all enriched or of special design, Thomas Chippendale was not cheap.

In spite of the position gained by makers of furniture, and the popular interest which justified the publication of elaborate and expensive works on the subject, the demand for really fine specimens,



[illegible][illegible]

FIG. 103.—A BILL OF THOMAS CHIPPENDALE.  
Property of Lord St. Oswald.

FIG. 164.



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Fig. 165.

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Fig. 166.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

even in 1750, was still very limited. The population of London consisted of 600,000 inhabitants, and but a very small percentage of these were patrons of art. The taste of the time, even in fashionable houses, showed a tendency to under furnish, rather than overcrowd a room according to modern ideas, although living-rooms probably had not quite that severe and empty appearance found in contemporary pictures and prints. An artist would naturally subordinate details to the importance of his figures, and at that time realism was by no means his aim. Hogarth's works were exceptions to the stereotyped and artificial productions of his age, and in 'The Marriage à la Mode' he goes further in detail than any of his contemporaries; but even the furniture he depicts is not of the finest quality, and he probably made sketches of important rooms for backgrounds, introducing furniture from his own surroundings, as the same chair and sofa is found constantly repeated in different pictures.

The rich people, for whom the finest furniture was created at this time, could not have made much personal use of it. It was an age when the gentleman of fashion did little but amuse himself. He rose late, and after dining about three, spent the rest of the day in coffee-houses discussing scandals and the affairs of the nation, and his evenings in gambling, theatres, or receptions at Vauxhall, etc. The ladies of fashion led much the same life, neglecting their children, their homes, and virtue itself, for every possible form of frivolity. They must, however, have possessed refinement of taste, as even their saucepans and other kitchen utensils were beautiful, and are prized and collected to-day. This fashionable and extravagant set was supplemented, as has always been the case, by a rising and very powerful commonplace class, that rapidly became the backbone of the country. Monsieur Grosley, writing in 1765, gives a description of the daily life of this section of the community, and shows the other side of the picture:—

'The manner in which the English bankers and merchants live, notwithstanding the care attending a commerce of such immense extent, is the same with that of the



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

lawyers, physicians, and all the citizens in general. They rise a little of the latest, and pass an hour at home drinking tea with their families; about ten they go to the coffee-houses, where they spend another hour, or meet people about business; at two they go to Change; on their return, they lounge a little longer at the coffee-house, and then dine about four; dinner concludes the day, and they give the remainder of it to their friends. In summer, the remainder of the day is passed either at some of the public walks, or in a country excursion, if they happen to have a villa near London. About ten at night they go home to bed, after taking a slight repast. In all seasons the London merchants generally retire to the country on Saturdays, and do not return till Monday at Change time.'

### CHAPTER VII



CHAIRS of the school of Chippendale, made between 1750 and 1780, are very numerous, but it is only necessary to give a comparatively small number of examples, and these have been selected not so much for their quality, as to represent different and ingenious methods in treatment of the backs.

Fig. 171 is a chair of great interest, so unusual in proportion and design that it is difficult to place. The narrow back, the desultory but interesting character of the ornamentation of acorns and roses, and the strange foliage on the shoulder of the legs would infer the same Irish origin as the writing-chair of rather earlier date, Plate ix. The lively feeling of the curves, the scroll-back treatment of the top rail, with the low relief of the carving, all point to the school of Dublin. There is a curious want of practised design in the strapwork of the back of this chair, suggesting an amalgamation from more than one style. Its date is probably rather before 1750. Fig. 172, one of a set from Nostell Priory, is a so-called French chair of the time, also rather before the middle of the century. The back is upholstered in accordance with the shape in





FIG. 171.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 3 inches; width, 2 feet.  
Property of PERCY HEATON, Esq.



FIG. 172.—MAHOGANY UPHOLSTERED CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 2 inches; width, 2 feet.  
Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.





FIG. 174.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 4 inches; width, 1 foot 10 inches.  
Property of Lord St. Oswald.

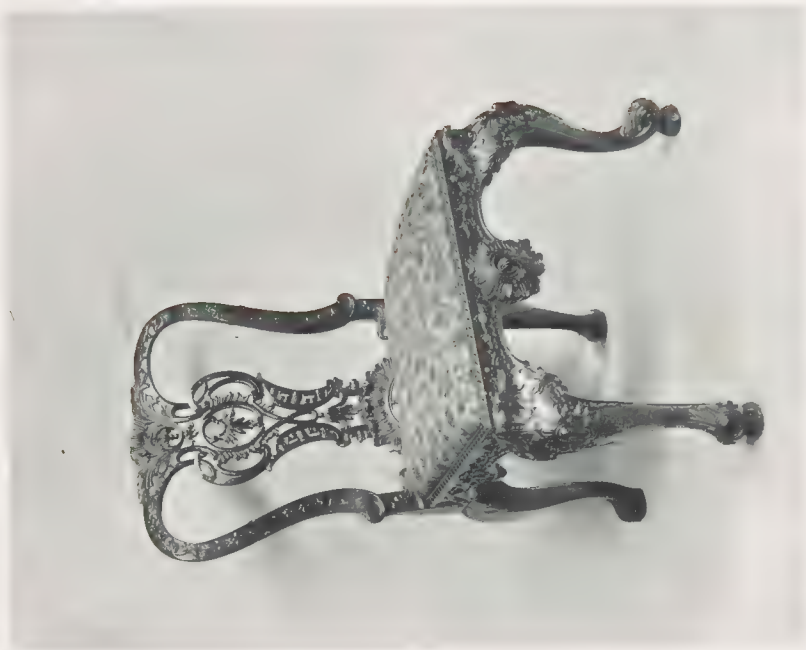


FIG. 173.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 2 inches; width, 1 foot 10 inches.  
Property of R. W. PARTRIDGE, Esq.



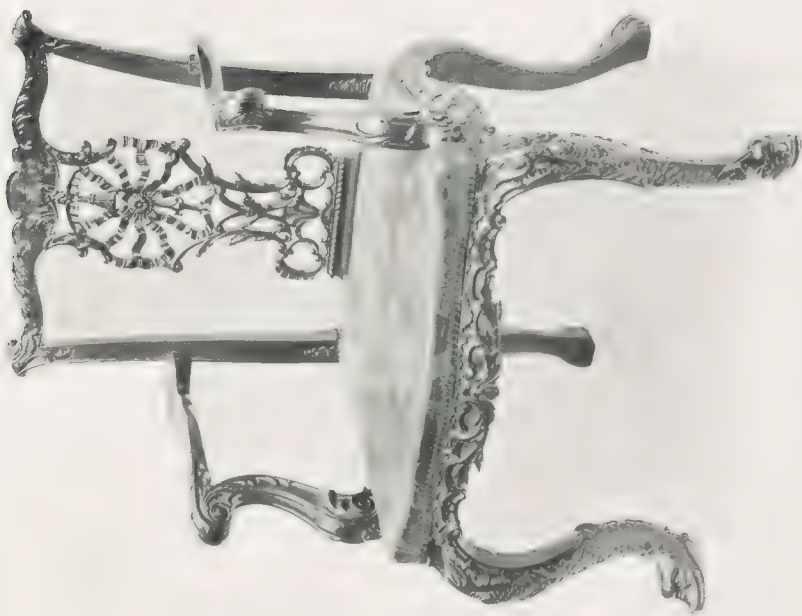


FIG. 175.—MAHOAGANY CHAIR.  
Property of Messrs. J. Mallett and Son.

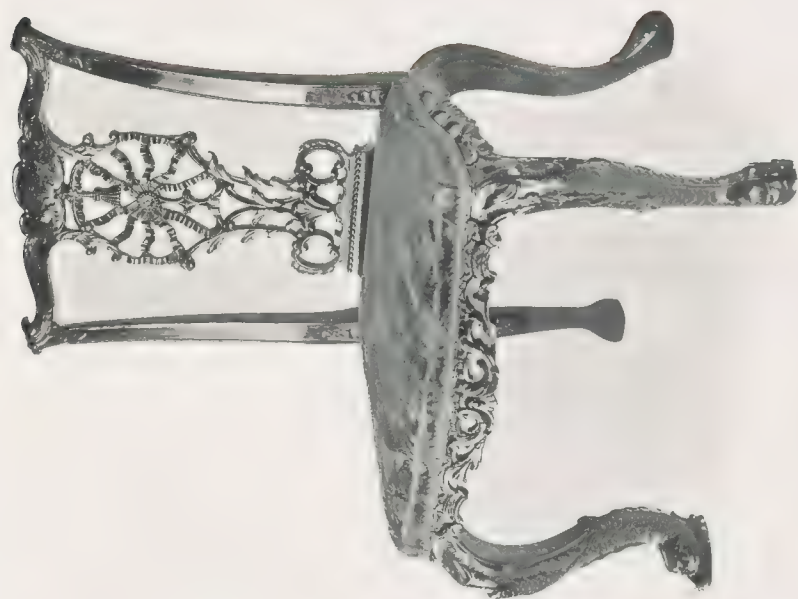


FIG. 176.—MAHOAGANY CHAIR.  
Property of H. H. Mulliner, Esq.



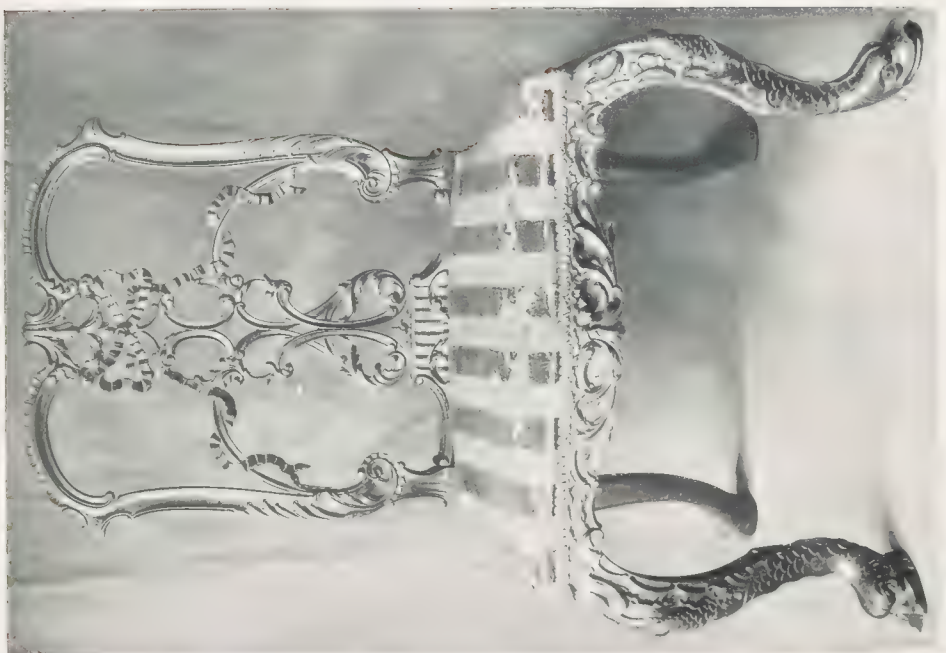


FIG. 177.—MAHOGANY CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 2 inches; width, 2 feet. Property of Mr. SRS. LAW, FAIRSHAM, AND COLES.

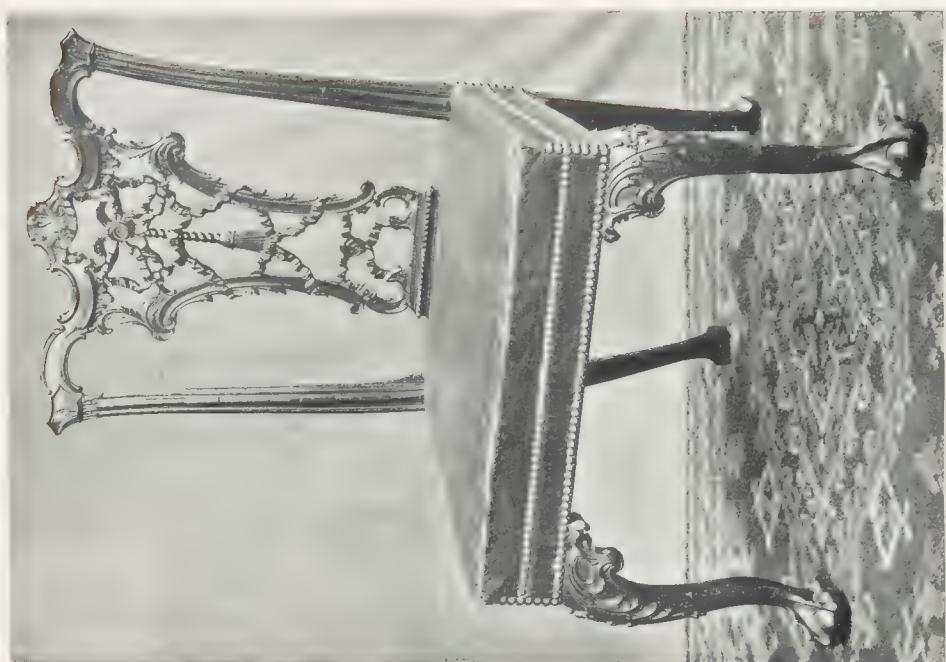


FIG. 178. MAHOGANY CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 3 inches; Property of Lord S. OSWALD.



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figured velvet, finished on the frame of the seat under open fretwork; the legs are hipped at the shoulders and carved in the French manner, but the feet finish in lion's paws. Fig. 173 is a well-known specimen of similar date; it preserves the old fashion hoop back, but the splat is elaborately decorated in Chippendale's style after 1750; the treatment of the seat-rail, and the carving of the legs ending in scrolled feet, are French in taste. The proportions of this chair are by no means equal to

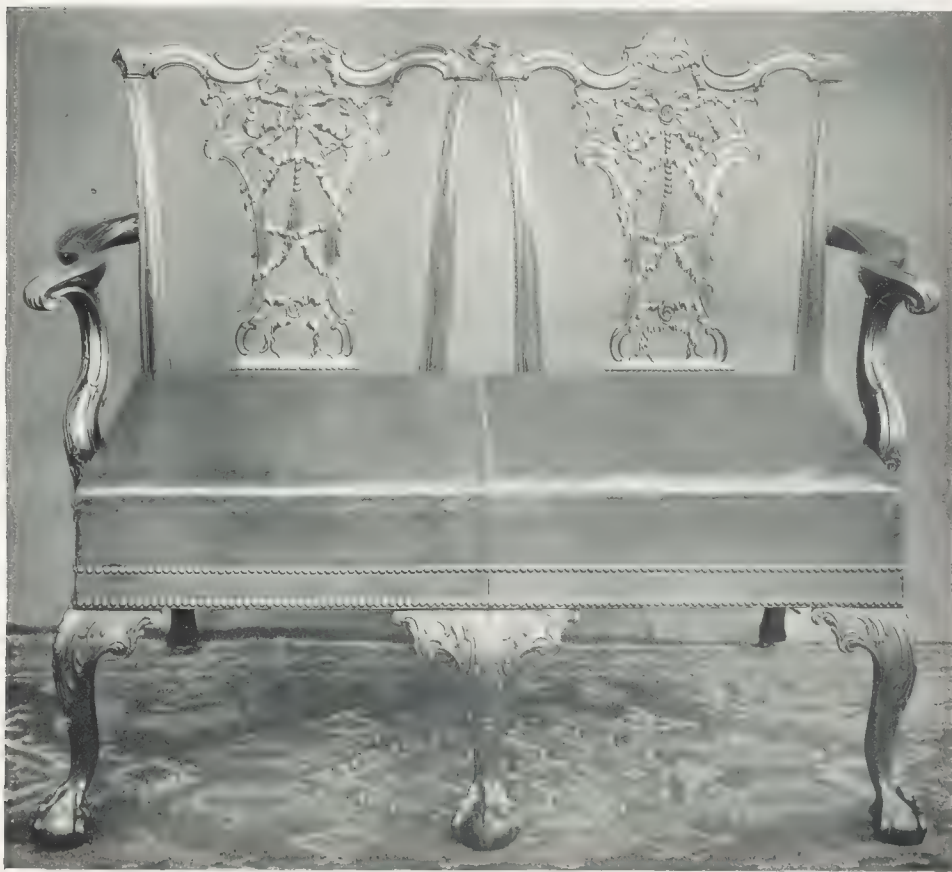


FIG. 179.—MAHOGANY DOUBLE CHAIR-BED. Height, 3 feet 3 inches; width, 4 feet.  
Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.





FIG. 180.—THE SAME AS FIG. 179, EXTENDED.



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the richness of carving, which is over-elaborated for such narrow surfaces. In the chair (fig. 174) the uprights of the back still suggest relics of the hoop shape. The corners finish in shells, and the splat is perforated in fan-shaped openings, the lower portion being plain, save for a trefoil headed opening and two wings of acanthus carved in low relief; the frame is of graceful and undulating form, carved with a shelled acanthus again repeated on the legs, which finish in vigorous ball and claw feet.

After the appearance of the *Director* in 1754, chairs became lighter in type, the legs varying between those of delicate cabriole form and the simple straight Chinese pattern; occasionally the treatment of the leg departs from both these principles. Fig. 175 shows a chair of the design known as 'ribbon back,' a motive that Chippendale stated to be his best; in this instance the ribbon takes the form of a wheel supported by an elegant tracery of C scrolls and acanthus sprays; the uprights and top are comparatively simple but of beautiful undulation, and it is this subtlety of line that always stamps the chair of a good maker. The arms and their supports are thoroughly French, and the seat-frame, though shallow, is closely carved; the legs present a marked contrast to the usual type, being very delicate at the shoulders, and finish in dolphins. This beautiful set of chairs is now divided, the arm and plain chair (fig. 176) belonging to different owners, who possess but single specimens. The design of the frame and legs of these chairs occurs in the *Director*, plate xxi. Fig. 177 is a more usual form of the ribbon-back, also with dolphin legs, and of beautiful proportion throughout.

Fig. 178 is a very perfect specimen of this ribbon-back pattern, so highly prized by collectors. The uprights of the back are strong, simply fluted, but of perfect proportion and graceful in undulation; the top rail is of fine serpentine curve, edged with C scrolls and centring in a shell; the splat is formed of two long C scrolls, united to the shoe and top rail by small curves in the same character, tied and interlaced with a delicate ribbon and tassel, forming the centres of the splat; the legs are delicate,



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and of ball and claw type most beautifully carved; the seat is covered with its original leather and nailing. It would be impossible to find a chair of more perfect workmanship and also adapted for practical use, strength, lightness, and distinction of design; the ornament is combined in the structure, and is not merely, as in so many cases, an addition to the shape. Belonging to this set is a double chair settee ingeniously constructed for use as a bed. Fig. 179 shows the piece as a settee, the seat closed with a double fold. When extended as in fig. 180, it is supported on two plain legs; the sacking and roping forming the bottom are original. The arms are of the French fashion and most beautiful in their curves. The colour of the mahogany in the wood of this whole set has lost all traces of the usual red and dark tones, having never been varnished or polished, and become the colour of a light-coloured cigar. It was quite a usual thing in country-houses at this time to make use of a settee bed in the sitting-rooms on an emergency. The fine execution of this entire set points to Chippendale as its author.

On Plate XIII. (a) is another of these ribbon-back chairs. It is one of the best type, much resembling those at Nostell Priory, and possesses the sense of strength that always accompanies a chair by a good maker. The uprights and top rail are fluted, the latter rising to a high cresting, and at their junction forming eared panels carved with a single leaf; the shoulders of the splat are high, and the bold ribbon that interlaces the two long scrolls of the splat is continued throughout its length, and ends in a small circle above the shoe; the arms are serpentine, finishing at the elbows in fluted whorls, and the supports are faced with foliage. The top of the seat-rail is carved with a fine leaf pattern, the lower side being delicately roped; although late in style, the ball and claw feet are well defined; the seat-covering is of late sixteenth-century Genoa velvet. The colour of this chair has suffered at the hands of the modern French polisher, who is answerable for the destruction of much surface quality on mahogany furniture. Five examples of these







PLATE XIII (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

(a) MAHOGANY RIBBON-BACK CHAIR.

HEIGHT, 3 FEET 4 INCHES

BREADTH, 1 FOOT 7 INCHES

PROPERTY OF

LIEUT.-COL. G. B. CROFT LYONS

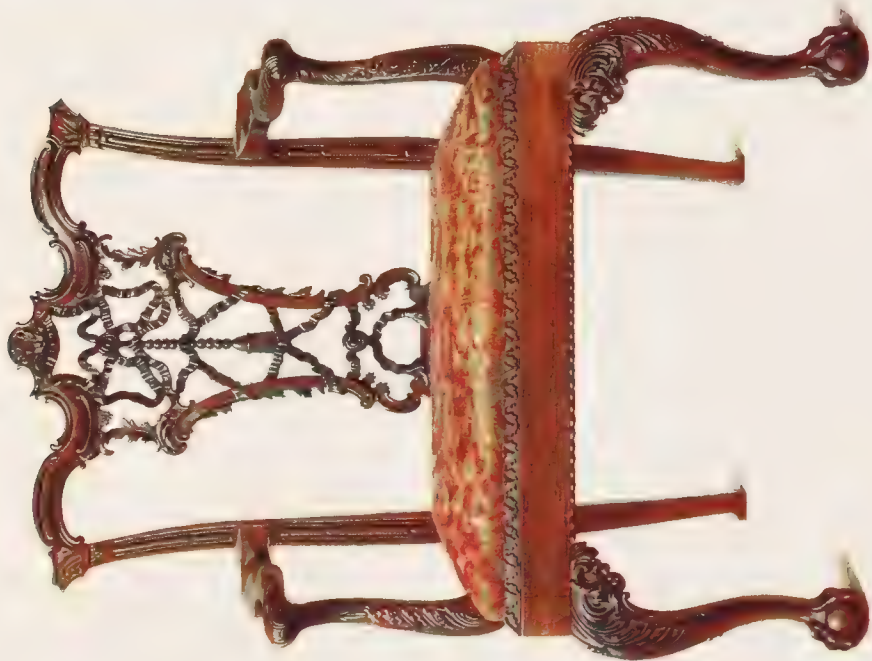
(b) MAHOGANY POLE SCREEN

HEIGHT, 5 FEET

PROPERTY OF

H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

ribbon-back chairs have been given, as although the patterns are well known, genuine specimens are seldom seen, their great value being an incentive to modern reproduction. They vary very little in date, being perhaps most fashionable about 1755. Chippendale alludes to these chairs as follows :—

‘Three designs for Ribband Backs. Several sets have been made, which would have given entire satisfaction. If any of the small ornaments should be thought superfluous, they may be left out without spoiling the design. If the seats are covered with red Morocco, they will have a fine effect.’

It is evident that the difficulties attending the execution of some of these designs were severely criticised at the time, for in the rare third edition he wrote :—

‘Upon the whole, I have given no design but what may be executed by the hands of a skilful workman, though some of the Profession have been diligent enough to represent them (especially those after the Gothick and Chinese manner) as so many specious Drawings impossible to be worked off by any Mechanic whatsoever. I will not scruple to attribute this to Malice, Ignorance, and Inability ; and I am confident I can convince all Noblemen, Gentlemen, or others who will honor me with their commands, that every Design in the Book can be improved both as to Beauty and Enrichment, in the Execution of it, by Their Most Obedient Servant Thomas Chippendale. St. Martin’s Lane. Feb. 27, 1762.’

Another representative type is the chair (fig. 181) from Blenheim, one of a set of twelve. Here the uprights are deeply fluted, and terminate at the corners in scrolled acanthus with a fine backward twist, the tall C scrolls of the splat forming part of the top rail and giving great strength to the design ; the centre is occupied by a foliated upright supported by a double loop resting on a plinth, rococo in style, that forms the bottom of the splat ; the legs are well carved and are of ordinary slight ball and claw pattern. Chippendale gives this exact design in his third edition, 1762, plate ix. fig. 3, and writes on the subject :—

‘There are various designs of chairs for patterns. The front feet are mostly different from the larger choice. Care must be taken in drawing them at Large. The seats look best when stuffed over the Rails, and have a brass border neatly chased, but



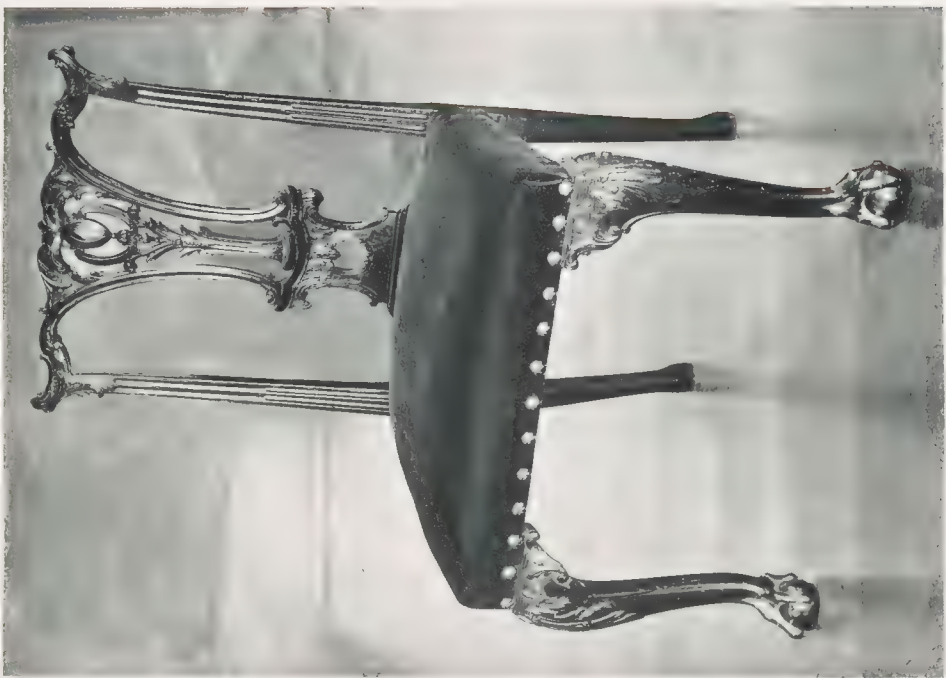


FIG. 187. MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Height, 6 feet 2 inches; width, 1 foot 10 inches.  
Property of the Duke of Marlborough.



FIG. 184. MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.



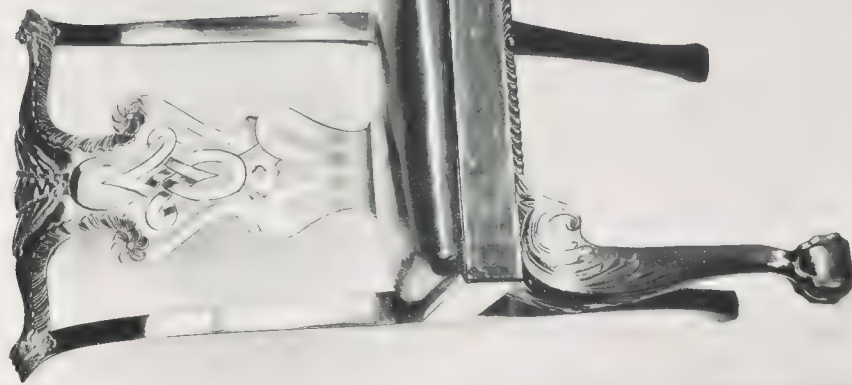


FIG. 182.

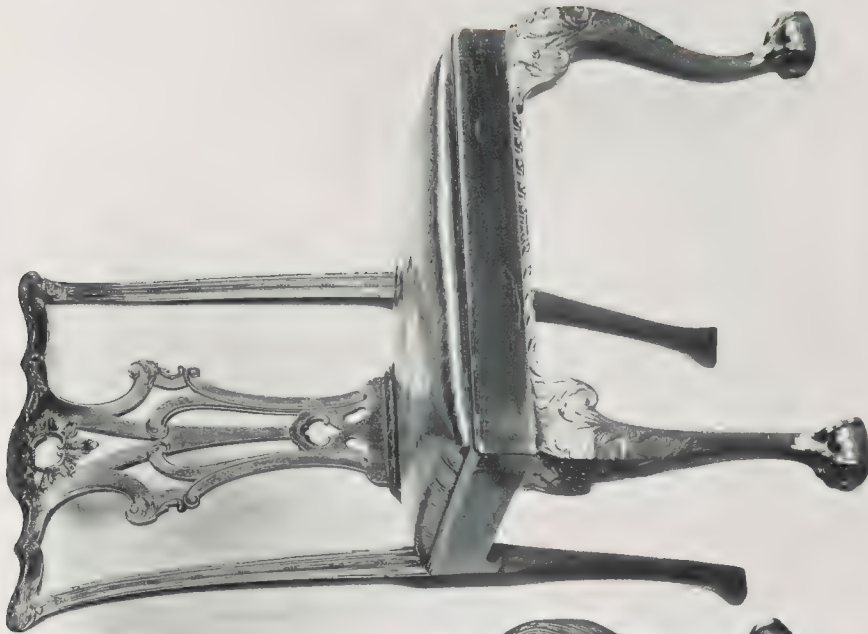


FIG. 183.

MAHOGANY CHAIRS.  
Property of A. HALL, Esq.



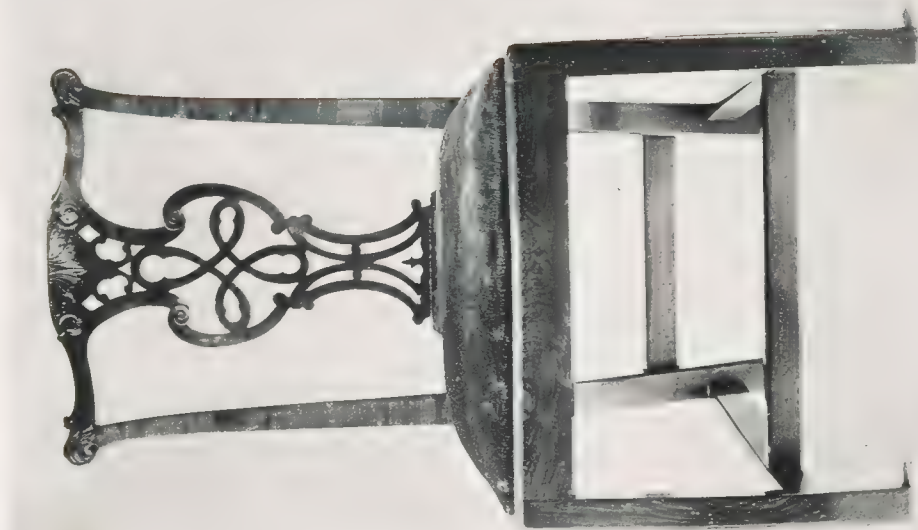


FIG. 185.—WALNUT CHAIR.  
Property of A. MEREDITH, Esq.

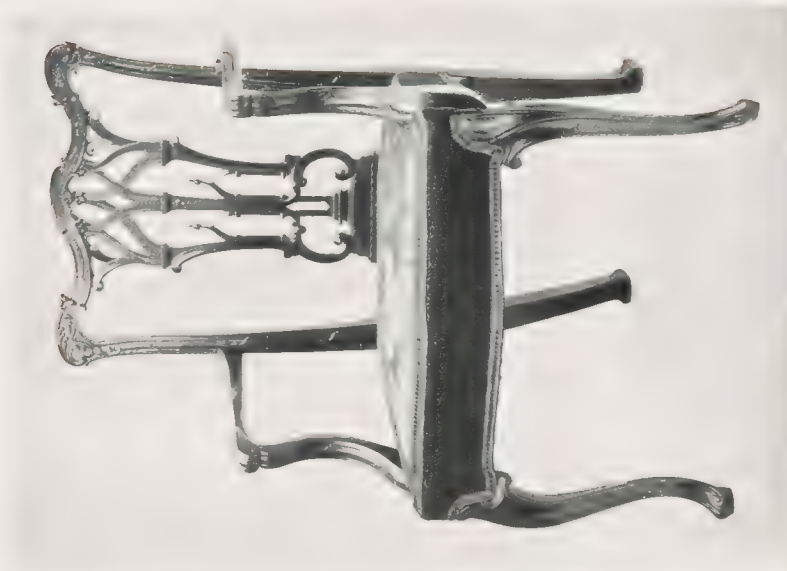


FIG. 186.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 2 inches; width, 2 feet.  
Property of PERCY MACQUOID, Esq.





FIG. 187.—MAHOAGANY CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet; width, 2 feet 2 inches.  
Property of D. L. ISAACS, Esq.



FIG. 188.—MAHOAGANY CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 3 inches;  
width, 2 feet 2 inches. Property of the Hon. CHARLOTTE MARIA  
LADY NORTH and R. EDEN DICKSON, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

are most commonly done with Brass nails in one or two rows, and sometimes are done to imitate Fretwork. They are usually covered with the same stuff as the window curtains.'

Figs. 182 and 183 are representative chairs of country make; the frames are rabbeted to receive the loose seats. Fig. 182 is the earlier of the two. Fig. 183 is rather more delicate in execution, the introduction of the fine bead and reel on the centre of the uprights being a rare feature. Fig. 184 represents an inexpensive chair of about 1760. The back is plain, depending for its ornament on simple, ingenious looping; the legs are straight and fluted, and the introduction of stretchers marks the reversion to a former construction. Stretchers are by no means necessary in a solid, well-made mahogany chair, so that it is difficult to account for their revival except in the hands of country or inexperienced makers. A large quantity of chairs, such as fig. 185, were made for ordinary households. The specimen given is interesting inasmuch that it is constructed and veneered in walnut. A chair of great delicacy, also about 1760, is shown in fig. 186. The ornamentation of the uprights and structure of the splats are in the Gothic taste. The combination of slightness and strength in these members is remarkable, showing a most careful choice of wood; the legs are entirely French in feeling, but in accordance with the extreme delicacy of the back, the seat has been re-upholstered with old needlework. Fig. 187 is a 'French chair,' with upholstered seat and back; the design of the elbows resembles the last example; the legs have a fine cabriole curve, and are carved back and front in the same manner, the shoulders being decorated with a French motive that finishes in a delicately carved spray of flowers; the feet are finely scrolled. The date of this chair is not before 1760. The chair (fig. 188) is one of eight chairs from Glemham Hall. Here the lines are even more French than the last example, and the arm supports are designed so as to pick up the mouldings of the back legs, the carving being very restrained in character. This pattern is represented exactly in the *Director* (1762), and fore-





FIG. 190.—WATER-COLOUR STUDIES FOR NEEDLEWORK.  
Property of the Hon. CHARLOTTE MARIA LADY NORTH and R. EDEN DICKSON, Esq.

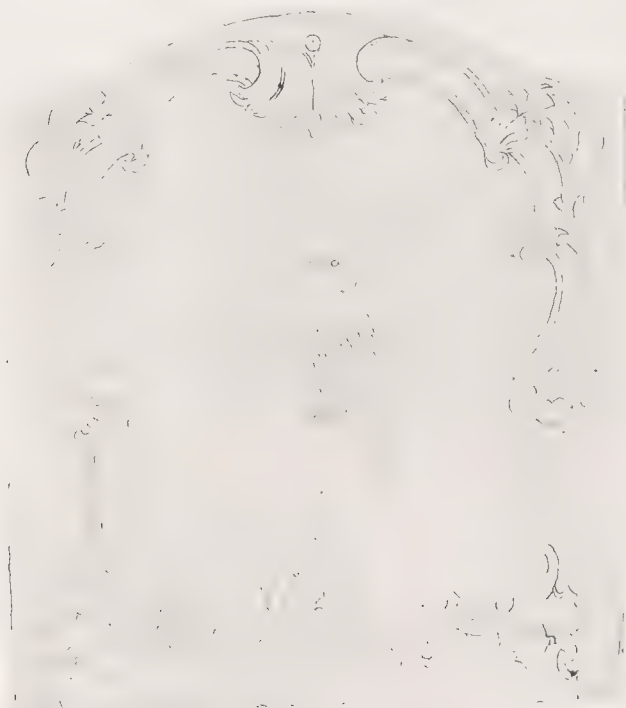


FIG. 189.—DESIGN FOR NEEDLEWORK.  
Property of the Hon. CHARLOTTE MARIA LADY NORTH and R. EDEN DICKSON, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

shadows the period of simplicity shortly to be introduced by the brothers Adam and Hepplewhite, for Chippendale, however much he conformed to change in public taste, was never naturally severe, and his later adoption of simplicity, especially in chairs, was not natural to him. An additional attraction to these chairs are their coverings, for which a series of designs were drawn and worked by Lady Barbara North, daughter of the eighth Earl of Pembroke and wife of Dudley North. The original designs

and separate drawings for each flower and bird still exist at Glemham. Fig. 189 is one of the outlines for the back of a chair, and fig. 190 details of flowers and a bird. Fig. 191 is a chair of the same period, one of a set of four, with a sofa and two stools to match; the arm supports are unusual in their design, but the seat-rail and legs resemble the last example. The original needlework with which the chairs are covered is in a beautiful design of brilliantly coloured flowers on a cream ground. Fig. 192 is one of the pair of stools. The covering here is a modern copy of the old needlework.



FIG. 191. —MAHOGANY CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 2 inches ; width, 2 feet 2 inches. Property of W. JAMES, Esq.





THE END





PLATE XIV (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

(a) MAHOGANY CHAIR

HEIGHT, 3 FEET 2 INCHES

BREADTH, 2 " 2 "

PROPERTY OF

H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.

(b) MAHOGANY CHAIR

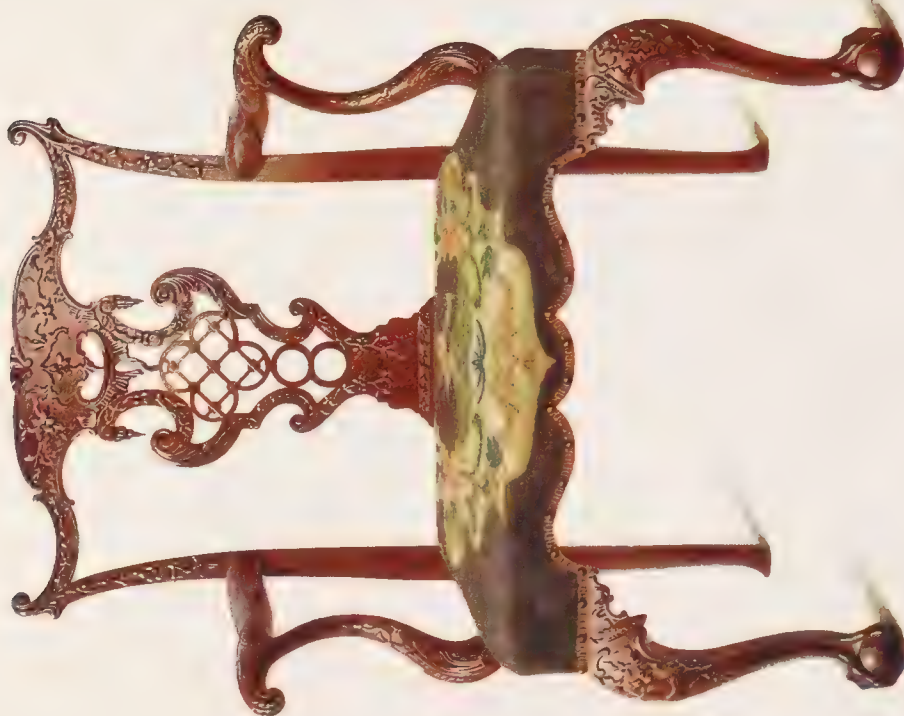
HEIGHT, 3 FEET 1 INCH

BREADTH, 2 " 3 INCHES

PROPERTY OF

PERCY MACQUOID, Esq.











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

The examples on Plate XIV. are good and interesting types of delicate decoration in low relief, but which has little reference to the lines of the chairs. Fig. *a* is the earlier in period; the top rail is broad and flat, rising at the corners in two horned scrolls; this and the supporting uprights are carved with a fine tracery; the splat is vase-shaped, the centre being occupied by a slight quatrefoil, the delicate surface carving of flowers being repeated here; the arms and their supports are of the form anterior to 1750, but the slight ball and claw legs, ornamented with the same tender tracery, are of this date; the front rail is scalloped to produce an effect of lightness. The chair is covered with its original needlework. In fig. *b*, one of a set of two arm and eight single chairs, all having their original needlework, the lines of the back conform to the style of 1760, and the same distribution of fine floral ornament can again be seen, in this case travelling the entire length of the uprights; the arms are very representative of this date; the legs are of the straight shape given in the *Director* as an alternative to the earlier cabriole fashion; they are carved in panels of ornament, a rare feature; the seat rail is bordered by a narrow gadrooning. In both examples on this plate the space between the splat and the uprights is wide; in both the same scale of carving is preserved, and an effort of refined restraint is everywhere perceptible.

The last of this series is fig. 193, made for the Chairman of the Corporation of the Poor, St. Peter's Hospital, Bristol, which town was the first to establish, in 1696, a



FIG. 192.—MAHOGANY STOOL.  
Property of W. JAMES, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

board of poor-law guardians. This chair is dated 1775, and is believed to have been made by Chippendale's firm for the Institution. On the top rail is carved a group in high relief of Charity, and beneath this the splat is composed of long foliated lines centring in a medallion bearing the badge of the Hospital and its date of foundation. The legs are of graceful French type, and show less signs of weakness than the rest of

the chair; it is of purely domestic pattern, and is here illustrated to show the general decadence of the lines and decoration that once formed so high a school, for at the time this example was made, fresh influences were pervading English furniture, and new craftsmen were setting new fashions.

It is a curious fact that the majority of collectors of old furniture begin with buying chairs, as collectors of silver generally commence with buying spoons. A great number of genuine single chairs have been furnished with arms in order to enhance their appearance and so add to their value, but the width of the seat is a sure guide



FIG. 193.—MAHOGANY CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 10 inches; width, 2 feet 2 inches.  
Property of ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL, BRISTOL.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

to the original condition, for in arm-chairs this should always be greater than in single, about 24 to 22 inches. The colour of old mahogany in its original state is never red, and if any traces of this are apparent, the piece must be regarded with suspicion, as it has been coloured in order to disguise additions ; a difference of colour between the splat and the uprights frequently occurs in old chairs, for good splats were often made of Cuban wood, which is hard, dark, and capable of close carving, while the back, legs, and uprights in the same chair are often found of Honduras wood, which is straighter in the grain and consequently capable of bearing a greater strain. The frames are found of oak, of mahogany, and of beechwood faced with mahogany. In the last case sometimes an adventurous worm will have ventured to penetrate through to the mahogany ; if this indication, with an old edge to the worm-hole is found, it is a certain proof that the frame has not been tampered with. By the following letter from a chairmaker to the *Annual Register* for 1764 can be seen the great care taken in the selection of wood, and also that certain recipes were then used for its preservation.

‘Beechwood is very well known to be very much subject to breed the worm which presently destroys it; this worm is supposed, not without reason, to feed on the sap that remains in the wood after it is cut into scantlings, and wrought up—therefore I imagined the best way to preserve it was to take away the food that the worm fed on, by extracting in some manner the sap. I boil in a large copper which holds near two hogsheads, for two or three hours, all the beechwood I employ in smaller uses, which is no inconsiderable quantity in a year, being a chairmaker and turner by trade ; and then before I dry it, I bestow another short boil on it of about a quarter of an hour in some fresh water, the first being strongly impregnated with the sap, and acquiring a high colour and a bitter taste. This way of managing the wood takes out all the sap, it works pleasanter, is more beautiful when finished, and lasts without comparison longer. I have often thought that for many uses it would be a great improvement of this wood, if it was a third time to be boiled in some vegetable oil, or at least, if not boiled in it, managed in some manner that the pores of the wood should be filled with the fat juice ; but as this is expensive, and I had no immediate occasion for such an improvement, I never made the trial, and it is too late in life for me to do it now.’

In genuine old chairs, the backs of even the most elaborate splats are found with irregular surfaces, the saw marks in the thickness of the fret



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

are generally perceptible, and the ground of the carving is not so smooth in finish as the rest of the chair. These three details can be easily imitated, but not the worn and polished edge to each of these irregularities, for age alone can give this. Another suspicious characteristic is the yellow-brown colour found sometimes on the edges of the carving, which has been caused by being rubbed down with a bone or pumice-stone, to obtain the abrasion caused by age. However elaborate and finished the carving, if it appears motionless and without life, it is either a copy by an indifferent craftsman, or a modern reproduction, for the fine carvers varied their detail as they proceeded, considering the design rather than its execution. The surfaces of chairs were not originally French polished and but rarely varnished; when old varnish is found, it is unwise to remove it; constant rubbing with a leather, or brushing with a stiff brush, will soon produce a surface that cannot be rivalled, and at no time should French polish be applied.

It was evidently considered desirable after 1750 to keep the backs of chairs as slight as possible, therefore examples in which thickness, clumsiness, or crowding of the lines is apparent are not representative of the best specimens of that period. The firm grip of the claw upon the ball in a foot is characteristic of old work, and although towards the end of this fashion the claw became more slender and bird-like, there should always be intention of action and vigour in the grip of a genuine claw. Whole sets of old plain mahogany chairs have been recently recarved in Italy and France, as well as being entirely manufactured there; the carving of these will generally be found to be in low relief and rounded at the edges, and the colour of the wood a grey brown, obtained by chemicals; an old chair, unless of Cuban wood throughout, is invariably lighter in weight than a modern forgery. Great skill is exercised in these manufactures, as the deceptions well repay the labour entailed.

Sofas became less severe in shape after 1750, the fluted motives of the legs being repeated on the rest of the piece. The old shape



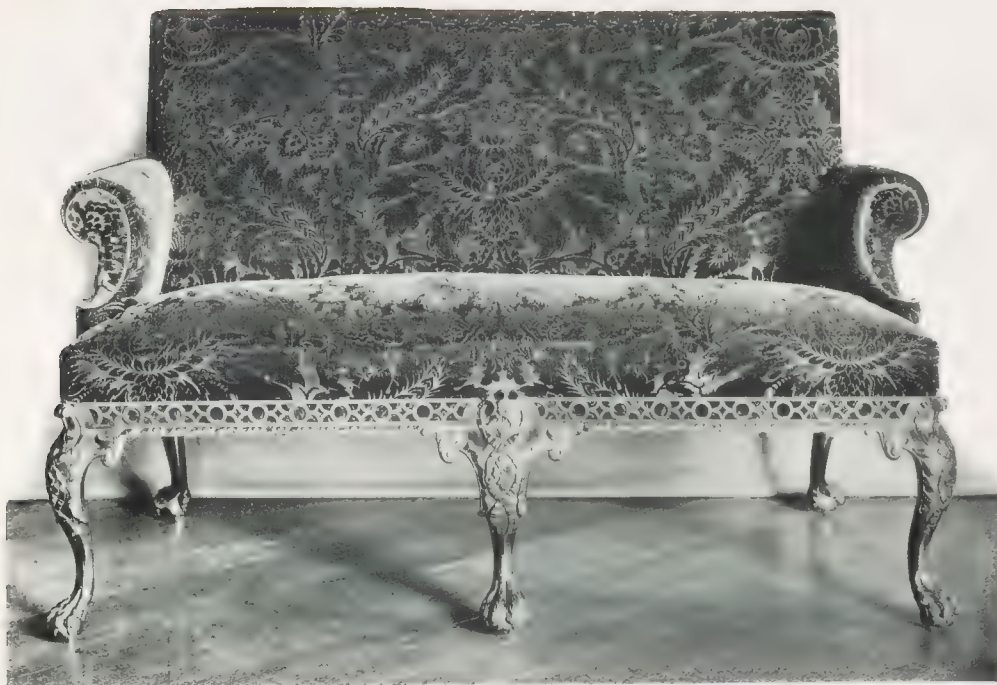


FIG. 194. —MAHOGANY SOFA. Length, 5 feet 2 inches; height, 3 feet 6 inches.  
Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.



FIG. 195. —MAHOGANY SOFA. Property of D. L. ISAACS, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

(fig. 194) belonging to the set of chairs at Nostell Priory (fig. 172) is before that date, the old-fashioned C scroll to the arms being much reduced; the trellis to the seat-frame and treatment of the legs exactly resembles the chairs. Fig. 195 represents a sofa of pure Chippendale shape, about the date 1753. The back consists of one long, sweeping curve edged with carving; the arms pick up the line of the back and terminate in ribbed scrolls with narrow gadrooned edges; the seat-rail is of graceful and undulating form, bordered with the same gadrooning, which is continued down each side of the legs; these are eight in number, rising in their centres to a bold, convex rib, which finishes on the seat-rail in a delicately carved shell and foliated sprays; the feet are of scrolled form, carved with cabochons and acanthus leaves. The whole treatment is very simple, yet exceedingly rich in effect; the covering is modern, but correct in design to the period of the sofa.



FIG. 196.—GILT SOFA. Height, 3 feet 6 inches; length, 6 feet  
Property of the MARQUESS OF ZETLAND.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

Fig. 196 is another sofa, one of a pair, more ornate in form and much like some examples given in the *Director*. The lines are French in feeling, but of English workmanship; the back is serpentine, rising to a cresting which centres in a shell between two foliated scrolls; the corners are beautiful in their curves, depending for their decoration on simple mouldings and a dolphin-shaped shoulder; the legs are eight in number, short but graceful, and carved with the same simple mouldings, which continue in serpentine curves, and form the frame which centres in a shell surrounded with husked ornamentation. Fig. 197 is another specimen, one of a pair, rather more severe in treatment; the back, like the last example, rises to a cresting, but in this instance the shell is perforated and the ornament at the corners curves upwards; the arms rise slightly and scroll over; these and the frame are decorated with a delicate design of floral sprays, sphinxes, and griffins; the ornamentation is exceedingly refined and of classical taste, resembling the forms employed on the earlier work of Robert Adam; the legs are comparatively



FIG. 197.—GILT SOFA. Height, 3 feet 4 inches; length, 7 feet.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF ZETLAND.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

straight, and end in lions' paws. The decoration of this sofa is exceptional, and is repeated on the fine arm-chair (fig. 198), which is one of a set belonging to the suite.<sup>1</sup> In these three last specimens, the woodwork is entirely covered with English gilding, and it was proved, on stripping them recently for the purposes of re-covering, that they were of English workmanship throughout.

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above, I have found at the Soane Museum the original designs, signed by Robert Adam, for figs. 197 and 198, and made by him in 1764 for Sir Lawrence Dundas, Bart., Lord Zetland's ancestor.—P. M.



FIG. 198.—GILT ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 4 inches; width, 2 feet 4 inches.  
Property of the MARQUESS OF ZETLAND.



## CHAPTER VIII

**T**ABLES, like all other furniture, increased in variety towards the middle of the eighteenth century, and mahogany dining-tables were common by that time; these were mostly made with simple legs and sometimes with ball and claw feet; they show no great originality, and not being convenient for modern requirements, have been much broken up to imitate and repair old furniture. The more modern mahogany



FIG. 199.—MAHOGANY DINING-TABLE. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

dining-table with sliding extensions being a far more practical construction, those of the eighteenth century have almost all disappeared.

Fig. 199 is a dining-table of about the date 1750, in which the legs swing out as brackets to support the extra leaves; it is of rare size and elegance, and the treatment of the long cabriole legs, twelve in number, is very clever, for although the ornament is by no means elaborate or continuous, an effect is given of the leg being entirely decorated, and the plain, empty feeling that generally accompanies a long cabriole leg is here overcome. At this time in many houses two oval or round tables were used, and the majority of these were plain, save for a little ornament on the shoulder and foot of the leg.

Sideboard-tables at this time grew somewhat lighter in construction, and the detail of their ornament was reduced in scale. The sideboard (fig. 200), one of a pair from Nostell Priory, is anterior to the publication



FIG. 200.—PAINTED WOOD SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 6 feet; height, 3 feet.  
Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.





FIG. 201.—DRAWING-ROOM AT NOSTELL PRIORY.  
Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

of the *Director*, and contemporary with the settee (fig. 194). The top is a marble slab supported by a frieze carved in a waved volute, so favourite a pattern on these pieces of furniture. The centre is occupied by a goat's head on a shield, connected to the legs by long serpentine scrolls and vine wreaths, repeating the Bacchanalian motive of the frieze of the room in which these tables stand; the legs resemble the pilasters to the overmantel, and form a triple cluster; the vine sprays are interwoven amongst them, producing a most charming effect. These beautiful side-tables are carved in white wood, and though originally gilt, are now painted oak colour; they were evidently made for the room (fig. 201) in which they have always been. The ceiling of this room is an excellent specimen of plaster-work just before 1750, but the painted panels on either side of the mantelpiece are a few years later in date, and emanated from the hands of the brothers Adam, who reconstructed and decorated other parts of the house. Two octagonal dining- or breakfast-tables can be seen on each side of the fireplace; they are quite plain, but of the period of the room at the time of its decoration. The grate, fender, and fire-irons are also all original to this time.

This idea of terminal legs connected with garlands is found represented in the first edition of the *Director*, plate lxi., of which fig. 202 is an exact reproduction, with the addition of a gadrooned top and acanthus on the feet. This piece is of mahogany, and probably a few years later than the preceding example (fig. 200); the wave-patterned frieze is intersected with lion masks, and an entablature decorated with a swag of flowers occupies the centre; the carving throughout is delicate and of the highest finish. Fig. 203 is a sideboard-table of about the date 1750; the top is plain, and the frieze decorated with a large open trellis, bordered with half-leaves of acanthus alternating in their arrangement, the centre being in the form of a shelled pendant; the legs are slight, carved with the usual shoulder decoration, and terminating in ball and claw feet. Fig. 204 is a slighter specimen than the last example; the gadrooning of



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the edge is broad and fine; there is no frieze, its place being occupied by a row of dentals; the careful consideration of this table will show why in so many instances the slender terminal leg was doubled or even trebled at the corners, for when single, it comes at an awkward angle and produces an appearance of weakness. Even well as this table is carried out, it is lacking in the proportions generally found in good mahogany furniture of this time. Fig. 205 is what Chippendale names a 'Gothic sideboard-table.' This fine piece is topped with a marble slab, and the carving of the frieze is in extremely low relief, in design a mixture of the French and Gothic tastes; the centre ornament is composed of delicate foliated scroll-work; the legs are large and square, of Gothic open work, enclosing Doric columns resting upon plinths of architectural construction. The design for this table without the columns is given in plate lx. of the *Director*; these were, no doubt, an afterthought, as the perforation of the legs might have looked empty without this addition. The colour of this fine table is a warm cinnamon, and the wood has never been polished or varnished. It has been shown that until the middle of the eighteenth century the sideboard with drawers and cupboards was not invented, and so separate pedestals corresponding in design to the side-tables were sometimes placed on each side, and these contained drawers for the wine and table accessories. Fig. 206 is a handsome specimen of one of these pedestals, carved with gadrooning and the waved volute; the handles are almost triangular and well suited to the character of the piece. Sometimes the lower compartment was lined with metal and fitted with a grating, underneath which a red-hot iron was placed to keep the plates warm. Fig. 207 is a plain specimen showing this arrangement; the woodwork is much burnt at the bottom, and this primitive mode of heating plates was probably one of the many causes of fire in country-houses during the eighteenth century.

One of a pair of very interesting sideboard-tables is shown in fig. 208. The top and frieze are perfectly plain, from which drops a deep border of





FIG. 202.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 5 feet; depth, 2 feet 6 inches; height, 2 feet 8 inches. Property of J. OATWAY, Esq.



FIG. 203.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Property of MESSRS. J. MALLET AND SON.





FIG. 204.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 6 feet 6 inches; height, 2 feet 9 inches.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.



FIG. 205.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 6 feet 6 inches; height, 2 feet 8 inches.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

valance form, beautifully filled with long acanthus sprays in low relief, centring in a shell on a ground criss-crossed with fine lines ; the legs, of exceedingly graceful form, carry out the convex shape at the shoulders, terminating in scrolls on small scalloped feet. These tables have not been varnished or French polished, and are of a light brown colour.



FIG. 206. MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD PEDESTAL.  
Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.

Fig. 209 is almost similar to the last specimen and evidently by the same hand ; here the centre shell is inverted and convex, and the shells on the corners of the frame are very prominent. There is no evidence of carving of this character by Chippendale or his school, and the free and open treatment of the flatness and largeness of design give an appearance of Irish origin. The wine-cooler from Badminton (fig. 210) possesses exactly the same character, and much resembles Irish silver salt-cellars of this period ; the introduction of the lions' masks at the junction of the legs and frame perhaps point to a rather earlier date than the last two tables, and the design of the deep border is different, but the character of all three pieces is virtually the same. Fig. 211 is a table made in octagon, fitted with chairs ; it was no doubt the furniture for one of the many grottos, pavilions, or summer-



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

houses so fashionable in the eighteenth century, when people in the country dined, supped, played, sang and danced out of doors. The table is simple in construction on four spider legs, and the chair seats, more ingenious than comfortable, radiate to the centre of the table, their backs being of the style known as 'Rustic Chinese,' and resembling in their perforation the trunks and limbs of trees. The table is capable of holding eight people, and when the chairs are packed round it, their top rails all touching, form a cleverly thought out open border.

An excessive spirit of gambling accounts for the large number of variously shaped card-tables made between 1740 and 1780. Walpole states that the young men of fashion in 1765 were in the habit of losing five, ten, and fifteen thousand pounds in an evening at Almack's. 'Lord Stavordale,' he says, 'not then one-and-twenty, lost eleven thousand pounds there last Tuesday, but recovered it by one great hand at hazard, when he swore a great oath, saying, "Now, if I had been playing deep, I might have won a million."' It was considered no disgrace for titled ladies towards the end of the century to keep public tables for gambling; one kept by the Hon. Mrs. Hobart, afterwards Countess of Berkshire, being much frequented by the Prince of Wales. Lady Mary Coke in 1768, according to her journal, hardly spends a day without playing cards, often losing £40 at 'Lu.' She also mentions Tresdille as a favourite game. Cribbage, Quadrille, Pope Joan,



FIG. 207.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD PEDESTAL.  
Property of Miss TYNDALL.





FIG. 208.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 4 feet; height, 2 feet 8 inches;  
depth, 2 feet 3 inches. Property of H. H. MULLINER, Esq.



FIG. 209.—MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD-TABLE. Length, 5 feet; height, 2 feet 8 inches;  
depth, 2 feet 6 inches. Property of MESSRS. MORANT.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

and Whist, however, maintained their positions as the most popular games. She also alludes to the 'Low tables,' so called from the low standard of stakes indulged in at the unfashionable season of the year, and which, she adds, 'brings out odds and ends that nobody thinks of inviting when better are to be had.' The magazines and papers of the day contain numerous notices of the passion to which gambling of all kinds was carried on amongst the young aristocracy, no medium apparently being considered too trivial, even to betting on which of two raindrops coursing down a window should reach the bottom first, or who would pull the



FIG. 210.—MAHOGANY WINE-COOLER. Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

longest straw out of a rick. The *Oxford Magazine* for October 1779 mentions that—

‘A few days since, some sprigs of our hopeful nobility who were dining together at a tavern at the west end of the town took the following conceit into their heads. After dinner, one of them observing a large maggot come from a filbert, immediately offered five guineas for it, which were accepted. He then proposed to run it against any other two maggots that could be produced at table. Matches were accordingly made, and these poor insects were the means of five hundred pounds being won and lost in a few minutes.’

Fig. 212 is a card-table of about 1745, but of the shape so much in favour earlier in the century. It is of walnut, but the decorative treatment in the carving is rarely met with in this wood; the legs are especially fine in their sweep, and the claws of the feet are deeply scaled. By the year



FIG. 211.—MAHOGANY TABLE AND CHAIR. Height, 2 feet 8 inches; width, 4 feet 8 inches.  
Property of H. H. MULLINER, Esq.





FIG. 212.—WALNUT CARD-TABLE. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



FIG. 213.—MAHOGANY CARD-TABLE. Property of W. E. GEORGE, Esq.





FIG. 214.—MAHOGANY CARD-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches; length, 2 feet 8 inches.  
Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.

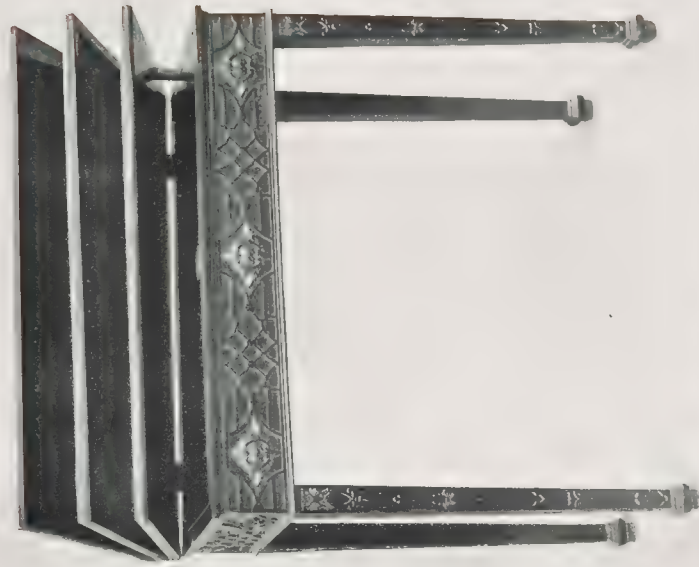


FIG. 215.—MAHOGANY CARD-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches;  
length, 2 feet 7 inches. Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

1750 the bases of silver candlesticks had become squarer in shape, so that circular corners were no more needed on card-tables to contain the octagonal and round bases of the earlier candlesticks. Fig. 213 is a good example, with square projecting corners; the edges are carved with a rose-and-ribbon band, and the plain fascia beneath is framed in a very open gadrooning, from which start legs of graceful form carved on the shoulders with a concavity in place of a cabochon, and finish in ball and claw feet. The style of this table is large and well carried out; it belongs to the type before 1750, while fig. 214 belongs to the second half of the century. Here the front and sides are slightly serpentine, and the top is double-flapped for cards and tea; the corners are squared, and the front

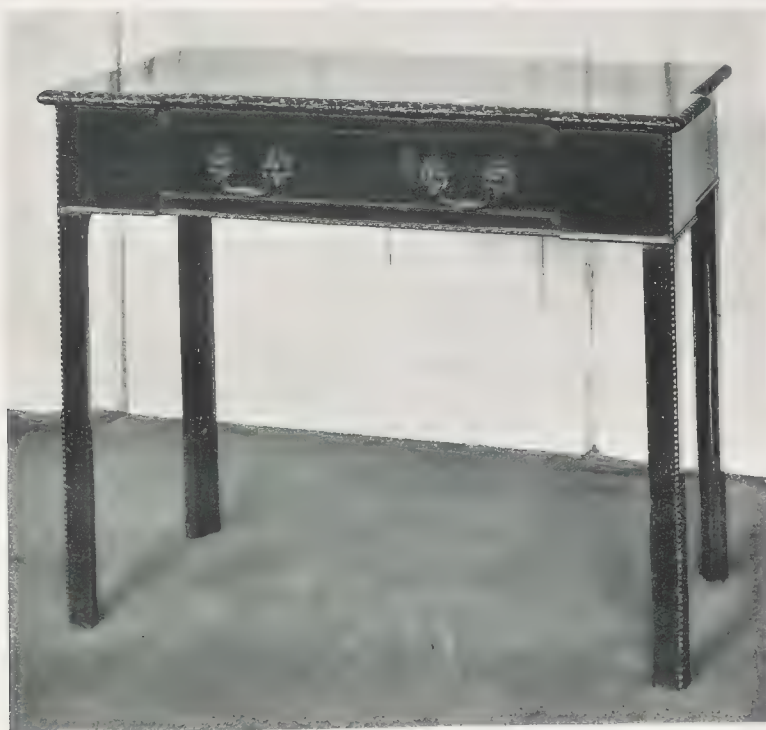


FIG. 216. -MAHOGANY TABLE. Length, 2 feet 6 inches; height, 2 feet 4 inches.  
Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

is delicately treated with a central ornament in strapwork on a criss-cross ground ; it is curious that the legs should be more highly decorated than



FIG. 217.—MAHOGANY TABLE. Length, 3 feet 2 inches ; height, 2 feet 6 inches.  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLET AND SON.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

the rest of the piece, but in this instance the balance of ornament is maintained. Fig. 215 is a table of later date, about 1765, with a triple-flapped top, one of which is marked out as a chess-board; the frame is decorated with a Chinese Gothic fret containing well-carved escutcheons; the legs show the first type of the taper square form coming into fashion.

Small mahogany tables were made of all sorts and sizes. A simple



FIG. 218.—MAHOGANY TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches; length, 3 feet 2 inches.  
Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

table of oblong form is shown in fig. 216. This may have served as a dressing-table, and was evidently made to stand against a wall, as the square projections for candles at the corners only occur in the front; the legs are straight, edged on the outside by a narrow beading which also surrounds the drawers. A favourite and fanciful pattern is shown in fig. 217, which is a mixture of Gothic and Chinese design; the legs are composed of a cluster of four columns standing on square plinths, while the frame is perforated in a series of cusped and arched openings united by a round rail; little fretted brackets of Chinese design connect this with the legs; the top is of serpentine form, bordered by a rosette-and-ribbon



FIG. 219.—MAHOGANY TABLE. Length, 3 feet 6 inches; height, 2 feet 6 inches  
width, 2 feet 2 inches. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



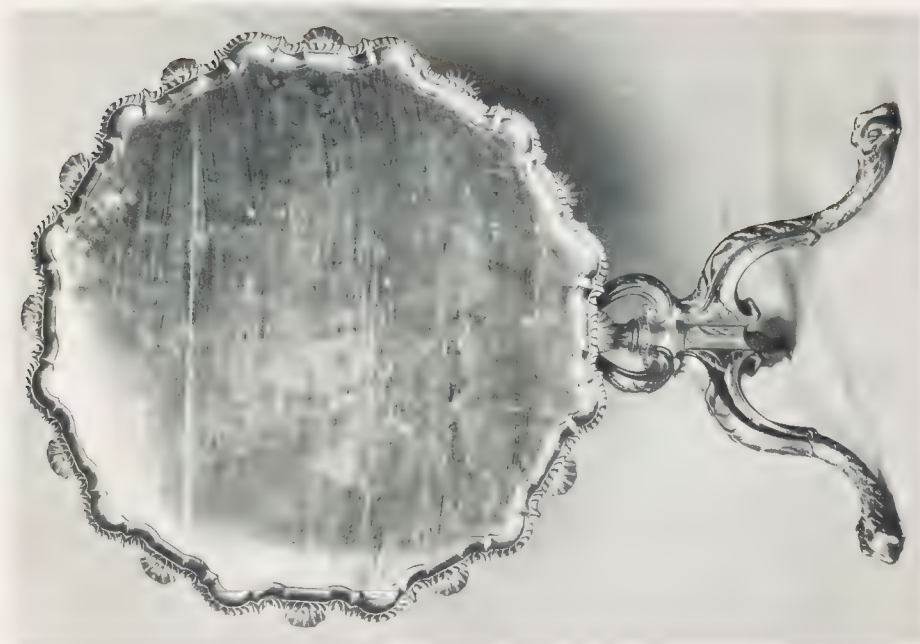


FIG. 221.—TOP OF TABLE FIG. 220.



FIG. 220.—MAHOGANY TABLE. Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

band, and a cross-stretcher of saltire shape completes the lower portion. This was the lightest kind of table for its size that had up to this time been constructed in English furniture, and was a type much patronised by admirers of the so-called Gothic taste. These tables are comparatively easy to copy, and have been much imitated. Standing upon this example is a highly finished model of what Chippendale calls a 'cloths-press commode,' probably made to contain trinkets, as it is too large for dolls'-house furniture, though many such toys were at this time made by the



FIG. 222.—MAHOGANY TABLE. Property of L. FLEISCHMANN, Esq



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

best workmen. Figs. 218 and 219 also represent highly finished specimens of this light kind of table. In both instances Chinese railings surround the tops to protect the ornaments placed upon them, a very necessary precaution with the full skirts of the men's coats and women's dresses. Fig. 218 is of Chinese design throughout, with square fluted legs and a rising cross-stretcher of fretwork; the brackets connecting the legs with the frame are most elegant and simple in motive. Fig. 219, altogether



FIG. 223. —MAHOGANY TABLE. Property of F. PARTRIDGE, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

more elaborate, is eight-sided and of serpentine form, the fretwork railing centring in four places in perforated arabesques. On the lower portion of the frame the Chinese motive is replaced by an escalloped leaf ornament; the legs, eight in number, are of the taper form introduced by the brothers Adam, and now beginning to be fashionable, but having here a Chinese treatment in their perforated feet, which are connected with four stays of the same character. The colour of this beautiful little table is a cinnamon brown, and its date is about 1765. It is reasonable to suppose



FIG. 224.—MAHOGANY TABLE. Property of W. H. LEVER, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

from the introduction of these small tables placed about the rooms that by this date furnishing had assumed a delicacy hitherto unknown. Dress, too, at this time was becoming less exaggerated, giving way to a neater and less eccentric style; and though the hoop was worn at Court till 1780, it was much reduced from its original proportions.

A great many small round tripod tables were made after the middle of the century; these were for tea or needlework, and when surrounded by a gallery, used for china. The custom of having several such tables in a room at this period is evident from the following extract in Miss Hamilton's diary, written about this time, when she was staying with Mrs. Delany at Bulstrode:—

‘At seven, Mr. Keyes, the groom of the chamber, told us tea was ready. We had each our little table, our candles and work, conversed upon ye news of ye day, fashions, dress, etc.’

Fig. 220 is an unusually elaborate specimen of one of these tables. In this instance the central support opens out into finely carved scrolls terminating in birds' heads, and surrounded with a pagoda finial hung with ivory bells; the legs are feathered and terminate in claw feet. The top (fig. 221), which is of rosewood, has a shell-and-ribbon edge. Fig. 222 is a simpler type, but a very practical and steady shape of tripod table; the top is of undulating and escalated form, with a raised ribbon edge, and is supported on five short columns resting on a small platform. A far more

3 : 2 I

24 I



FIG. 225. MAHOGANY KETTLE-STAND.  
Property of ROBERT EASTWOOD, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

elaborate china table is shown in fig. 223, in which the central support is carved with the scattered and purposeless design, so representative of Irish origin. At the junction of the legs and shaft a Gothic cusped trefoil is introduced, quite irrespective of anything in the surrounding decoration, and the claw to

the foot shows late characteristics.

Fig. 224 is a very good table of this kind, in which the open edging is treated in basket form of scrolled acanthus and strap-work; the outer edge undulates in serpentine curves, and is bordered with a neatly carved leaf pattern; the stem and shoulders of the tripod are covered with carving. The ball and claw feet of these last two tables show great decadence, the foot of the dragon has descended to the lizard, and the pterodactyl prototype has sunk to the little reptile that crawls about ruins. These tripod tables may seem somewhat small for tea, but it must be remembered how small the teapots and cups were in those days, and the kettle, with its silver stand,



FIG. 226.—MAHOGANY KETTLE-STAND.

Height, 2 feet 2 inches.

Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

was accommodated on a separate piece of furniture. Fig. 225 is one of these kettle or urn stands, surrounded by a trellised gallery, beneath which is a small slide to hold the teapot whilst being refilled; the legs are tall, decorated on the shoulder and foot with the same design. A kettle-stand of more elaborate workmanship is given in fig. 226. It consists of a box without a top, resting on four cabriole legs of beautiful design; it has an opening for the spout of the kettle and a slide beneath; from its large size, this piece was most likely used in connection with hot drinks, such as punch, bishop, negus, and other such beverages conducive to the gout of Georgian times. The inside lining is of metal. Fig. 227 represents another form of kettle-stand or table, of which a great quantity were made in many different varieties; these were also much used to hold large bowls of flowers. Many of these small tables have tops of rosewood, a wood much employed in Chippendale furniture as an adjunct to mahogany, and later as an inlay. The finest rosewood comes from Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, and is mostly the wood of the tree *Dalbergia nigra*, a leguminous tree of great size; the heartwood attains large dimensions, but as it begins to decay before the tree arrives at maturity, is very often faulty and hollow in the centre; for this reason squared logs or planks are not imported, it being cut in half round fitches 10 to 20 feet in length and 5 to 12 inches in thickness, and owing to this irregular form is sold by weight, its value varying according to the richness of colour. The splinters of this wood are



FIG. 227.—MAHOGANY STAND.  
Height, 3 feet 8 inches.  
Property of D. L. ISAACS, Esq.



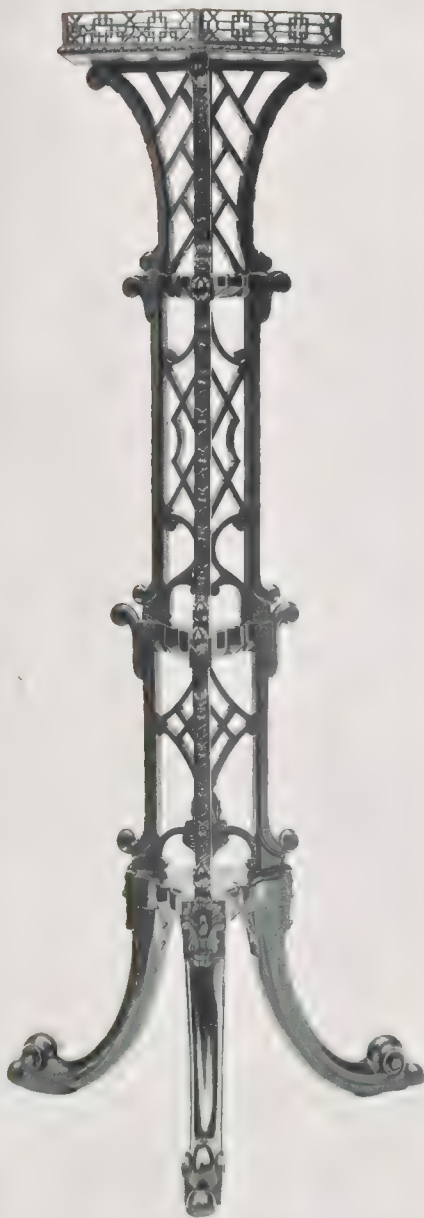


FIG. 228.—MAHOGANY CANDLE-STAND.  
Height, 5 feet. Property of the EARL OF RADNOR.



FIG. 229.—LACQUERED CANDLE-STAND.  
Height, 4 feet 10 inches. Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

extremely poisonous, and great care has therefore to be exercised in its working.

Fig. 228 is what Chippendale designates as a candle-stand, and is a representative piece of Chinese lattice-work. These candle-stands were made to match every style of furniture of this period, and the lights placed upon them were usually silver candelabra. Fig. 229 is a specimen of rather earlier date; in this instance the surfaces are uncarved and decorated with black and gold lacquer, and the scrolling of the shaft and the tripod-stand are Chinese in feeling. Amongst this kind of furniture can be included such an example as fig. 230, what is termed now a dumb-waiter; it exactly resembles the small round tables, but is in three tiers. Fig. 231 is an elaborately decorated washhand-stand, of the type generally in use about the year 1750. The circle to contain the basin is delicately carved and edged with a gadrooned border; this is supported on slight and ribbed columns; the plinths frame a compartment divided into two drawers, upon which is a round



FIG. 230.—MAHOGANY WAITER.  
Property of D. L. ISAACS, Esq.





FIG. 231. -MAHOGANY WASH-STAND. Height, 2 feet 8 inches; width at top, 1 foot.  
Property of T. OATWAY, Esq.



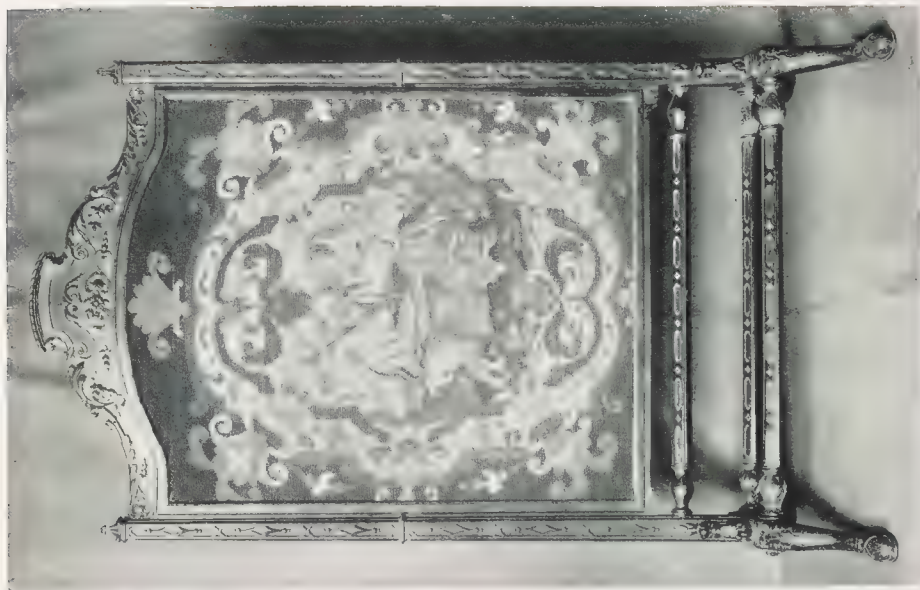


FIG. 233. MAHOGANY FIRE-SCREEN.  
Property of H. PERCY DEAN, Esq.



FIG. 232.—WALNUT FIRE-SCREEN.  
Height, 4 feet; width, 2 feet 3 inches.  
Property of the EARL OF CARRINGTON.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

soap-box. The lower portion consists of a carved tripod to hold the water jug or bottle when the basin was in use. From this tripod rise four C scroll supports, beautifully carved in the French taste, which carry the upper portion of the piece. The bottle for the water was usually

of globular form, and like the basin, of oriental porcelain; and as cleanliness was not customary at this time, these bottles are invariably found of very small dimensions. More simple tripod wash-stands of this character still exist in great numbers; they are sometimes found with pewter fittings.

The writers in the eighteenth century allude very plainly to the want of personal cleanliness, even in the highest classes. Probably at no period of our civilised society were women so beplastered with paint and powder; it was therefore impossible that much use could have been made of water. In Georgian times several deaths amongst fashionable ladies were recorded as having occurred from the abuse of paint, among them Lady Fortrose, Lord Harrington's daughter.

Other small and popular articles of furniture were fire-screens, affording the opportunity of an additional piece of colour in a room, and the framing of specimens of the best needlework. In the earlier form of these screens, the panel was contained within two uprights, with a decorated cresting and bottom rail. Fig. 232 is an early specimen in



FIG. 234.—MAHOGANY POLE-SCREEN.  
Height, 4 feet 4 inches; width, 2 feet.  
Property of the EARL OF CARRINGTON.



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walnut of the beginning of the eighteenth century; the needlework depicts the Judgment of Solomon, and the series of heads that line the steps are not those of spectators but representations of the golden lions that formed the approach to the throne. Fig. 233 is another example of the middle of the century, made in mahogany; the cresting is carved in the best manner of this period, the work on the uprights and feet being of the same character. The needlework here is not of fine quality, and earlier in style than the frame. Fig. 234 is the later form of screen in which the panel works up and down a pole. The subject of the needlework is very involved and of much earlier date than the woodwork of the screen, which is finely carved in the style of about 1755. Fig. 235 is an example of a simpler and rather later kind; it is very well proportioned, and the needlework is contemporary with the screen. In Plate XIII. (*b*) the carving is of elaborate workmanship, and the whole construction of unusually large dimensions.

Mahogany furniture in lighter Chinese style was made simultaneously with the other types already mentioned; the slight lattice-work decoration so much introduced on it, though not practical in its strength, formed a charming accompaniment to other forms of Oriental arrangement. This furniture was made from designs by Chambers, Darly, Ince and Mayhew, Lock, Mainwaring, and many others as well as Chippendale, and Mr. Clouston's work on Furniture Makers of the eighteenth century

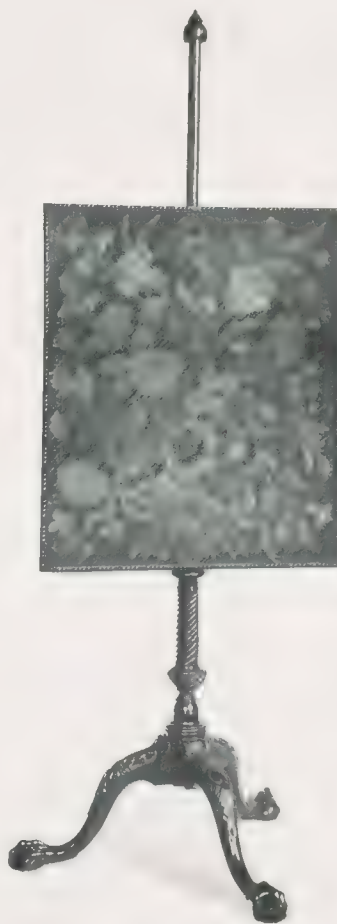


FIG. 235.—MAHOGANY POLE-SCREEN.  
Property of PERCIVAL GRIFFITHS, Esq





FIG. 236.—MAHOGANY CHINA-CABINET. Height, 7 feet 3 inches; length, 4 feet.  
Property of SIR BASIL MONTGOMERY, Bart.







PLATE XV (AGE OF MAHOGANY)

MAHOGANY CHINA-CABINET

HEIGHT, 8 FEET 9 INCHES

WIDTH, 5 " 10 "

DEPTH, 1 FOOT 8 " "

PROPERTY OF

MESSRS. D. L. ISAACS











## ENGLISH FURNITURE

gives detailed and interesting information on the merits and styles of these different firms.

Plate xv. is a china-cabinet in simple Chinese taste; the centre compartment rises in a roof of pagoda form, and the whole piece is dependent on its proportions, and is practically without decoration. Fig. 236 is another of these cabinets; the roof is here supported on an open-work frieze of Chinese railing, and the pagoda motive is repeated again in the highly decorated woodwork of the glazing; the inside angles of the legs are strengthened with columns, an unusual feature.

A lady's writing-table, with a superstructure of lattice-work shelves and six plain drawers, is shown in fig. 237; the writing-slide is carried on two movable legs decorated with Gothic strapping; the fronts of the shelves are edged with light galleries; its date is about 1760. Fig. 238 is a piece of rare form, composed of lattice-work, containing two drawers, beneath

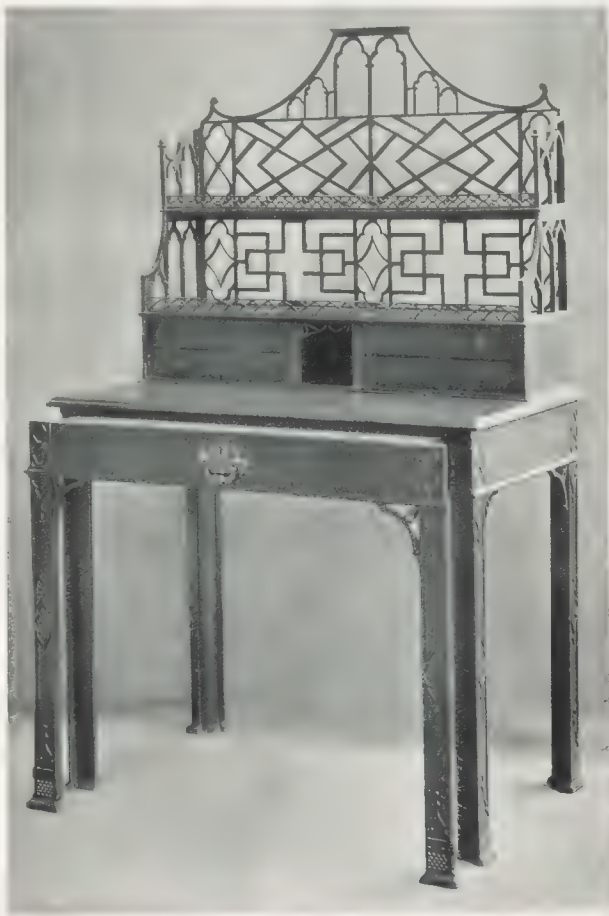


FIG. 237.—MAHOGANY WRITING-TABLE.  
Height, 2 feet 7 inches; length, 3 feet; depth, 1 foot 9 inches.  
Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.



## ENGLISH FURNITURE

which are deep shelves for the display of china; the fronts of these drawers are plain, but the corresponding panels at the sides and the pilasters are decorated with swags and pendants of flowers carved in high relief; it is very exceptional to find this raised and bold treatment of flowers in conjunction with Chinese fretwork. Fig. 239 shows a



FIG. 238.—MAHOGANY CHINA-CASE. Height, 3 feet. Property of the EARL OF RADNOR



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lady's work-table, the top opening as a box, with a lid decorated on the inside with two panels of fretwork and enclosing a series of small compartments; the sides are ornamented with a chained looping of applied fretting, and beneath this is a shelf surrounded on three sides by a Chinese railing; the legs are carved in low relief and are in admirable proportion to the rest of the table. Hanging china-cupboards of this same character were made both in mahogany and soft woods; fig. 240 is one of the latter painted white. The glazing of the doors is diamond-paned, and these are headed by a simple cornice, finishing in four vase-shaped finials; the pagoda-like erection surmounted by a peacock that forms the top is a bizarre mixture of French and



FIG. 239.—MAHOGANY WORK-TABLE. Height, 2 feet 6 inches; length, 2 feet.  
Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



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Chinese motives. Placed in correct surroundings, such a piece of furniture would have had great decorative value.

A pair of mahogany hanging shelves for china in the same taste, but more restrained in feeling, are those belonging to Lord St. Oswald (fig. 241), and probably supplied by Chippendale in 1766 with other



FIG. 240.—HANGING-CHINA CUPBOARD. Property of Miss TYNDALL.



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furniture for Nostell Priory. The centre compartment is headed by a pagoda-shaped roof rising to a finial, terminating in a baron's coronet; the lattice-work of the sides is somewhat stouter than is generally found, but the fretwork border of the top and bottom is delicate; the colour of this charming example is a warm light brown, and the wood is unpolished.



FIG. 241.—MAHOGANY CHINA HANGING SHELVES. Property of LORD ST. OSWALD.



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There are many designs of this character in the *Director*, as ornamental shelves filled with china were a favourite form of decoration. Bishop Pococke, in his Tour in 1754, alludes to—

‘A Tower built by the Duke of Cumberland near Windsor, with a beautiful hexagon room, in which there are in the sides three doors and three windows, two of em lead to the round closets, in one are little shelves hung up for books for the Duke’s use, in the other on such shelves is china for tea and coffee, the hexagon is most beautiful, the sides are adorned with festoons and flowers and fruits hanging down from them on each side of the doors and windows in stucco, and painted in their natural colours.’



FIG. 242.—MAHOGANY CHINA-CASE.  
Property of H. H. MULLINER, Esq.

The above quotation shows that the china was used direct from the shelves, and also that the pendants and swags of flowers and fruit so general at this time were sometimes painted realistically.

Fig. 242 is a china-cabinet in this same fretwork style, the gallery forming the cresting being of most original design, and a cornice of pagoda shape is cleverly introduced; the framework of the stand is plain save for two small panels of card-cut lattice, and the three handles to the drawers are of fine brass-work and Chinese in sentiment; the two-sided legs are also open, the returns to



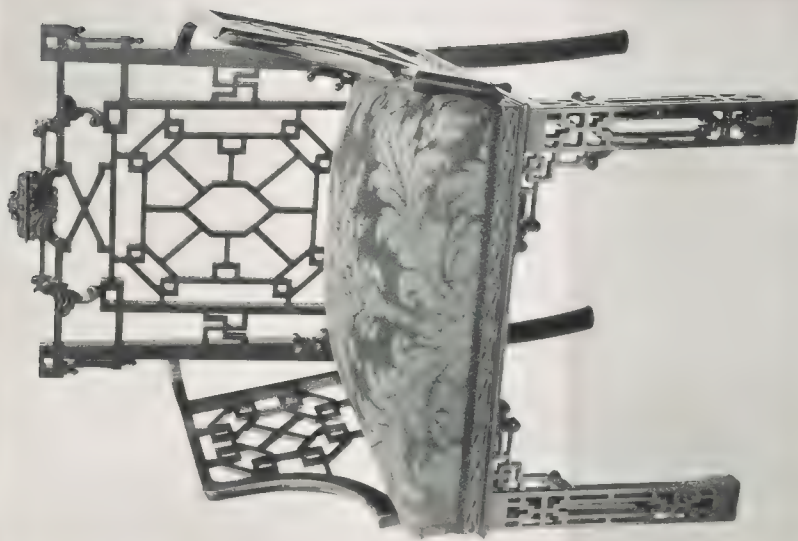


FIG. 243.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 2 inches.  
Property of J. H. LEVER, Esq.

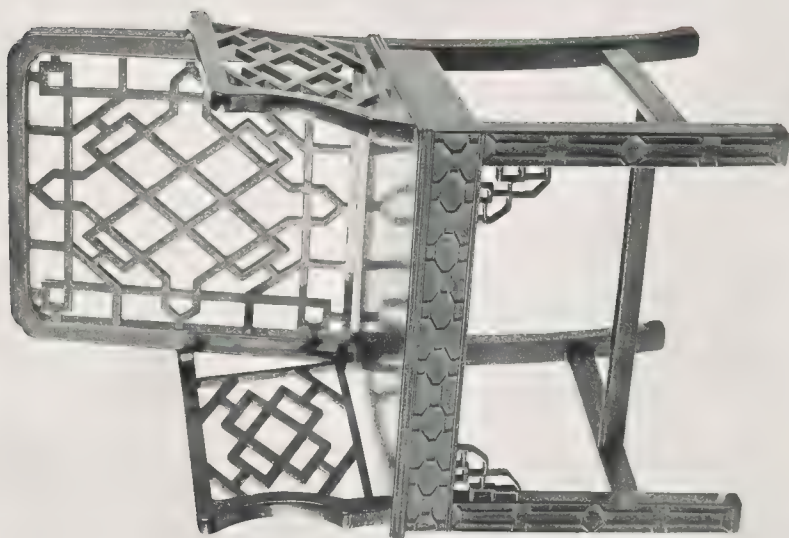


FIG. 244.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet.  
Property of H. H. MULLINER, Esq.



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the back legs being left solid. Chippendale calls such pieces 'China Cases.' Nothing more suitable for china has ever been designed than this fretwork furniture, the lightness of construction forming a background that never overweights the fragile ornaments it is designed to contain. This same fretwork treatment was also applied to sofas and chairs, but with a less satisfactory result, as it gave a sense of brittleness

and insecurity, and the seats always appear to sacrifice comfort to ingenuity and eccentricity; it is therefore probable that this fashion in chairs was not of long duration.

Fig. 243 is a highly finished chair of this type; it is purely Chinese in feeling except for the introduction of small pieces of French ornament on the cresting and where the uprights meet the seat. As it would obviously be most difficult to repeat the fretwork on the back legs and uprights, the unsuitability of this open-work design for seats is at once apparent. In arm-chairs of this character, panels of fretwork filled the spaces under the



FIG. 245.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet.  
Property of the DUKE OF BEAUFORT.



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arms, and these were generally set at a slightly obtuse angle. Fig. 244 is a more solid specimen with a wooden seat, and with solid front legs with card-cut fretting and stretchers; the character of this chair lacks the grace of Chippendale's suggestions for Chinese furniture, and is probably from a design by Darly or Mainwaring. Fig. 245 is one of a set and particularly pleasing in shape; it corresponds in design to the table (fig. 239); the seat is caned, and the colour of the mahogany is very pale and of the quality known as fiddleback.

Settees and stools were also made of this character to match the chairs. Fig. 246 is a stool in which the legs are solid, faced with card-cutting, but the stretchers are perforated, and the brackets connecting the gadrooned frame with the legs are unusually simple. It is instructive to notice the more casual introduction of this lattice-work in combination with other styles, as in the chairs (figs. 247 and 248). In the former the Chinese motive is introduced into the splat and uprights, the legs of the chair being of late ball and claw form, and the arms upholstered in leather. In fig. 248, one of a set at Penshurst, the lattice-work forming the splat is surmounted by an earl's coronet and supported by a solid piece, pierced with an opening; the form of the uprights at their junction with the seat, the carving on the legs, and the serpentine and cornered front, suggest Irish workmanship of about 1768. The eccentricities in both these chairs are probably due to country manufacture. With these fretwork chairs may be classed the late examples of Gothic design. In fig. 249 the splat is perforated with Gothic tracery, while the rest of the chair is plain save



FIG. 246.—MAHOGANY STOOL.  
Height, 1 foot 6 inches; length, 1 foot 8 inches.  
Property of S. CAMPBELL CORY, Esq.





FIG. 247.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 2 inches. Property of Miss TYNDALL.



FIG. 248. MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet.  
Property of Lord DE LISLE AND DUDLEY.



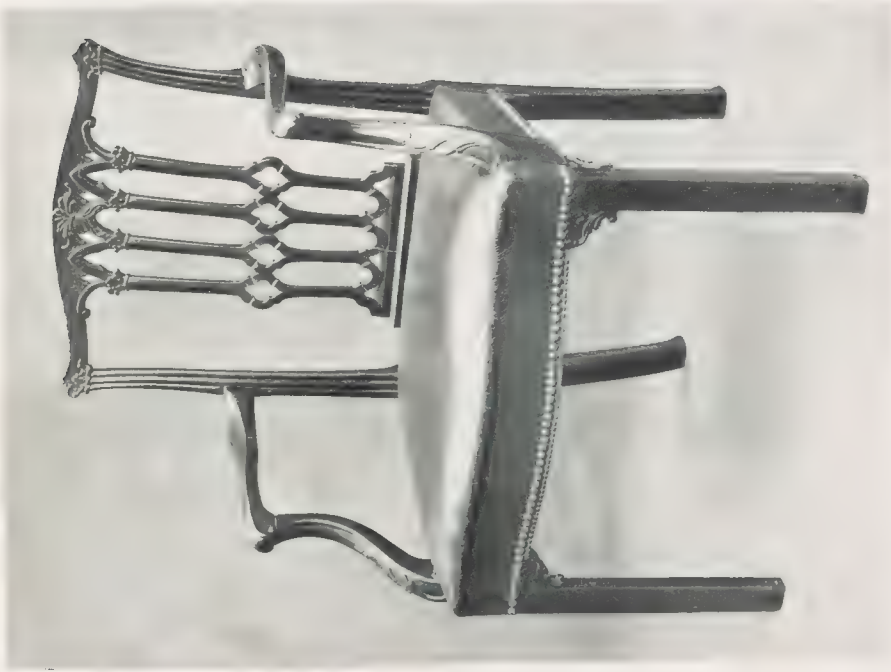


FIG. 249.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 1 inch. Property of WEDON GROSSMITH, Esq.



FIG. 250.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR.  
Height, 3 feet 4 inches. Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.



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for the introduction of some foliated ornament in the French taste. The splat in fig. 250 is of Gothic perforation, edged with a fine C scrolling, and the stretchers repeat this motive; the legs are treated as terms and finish in splayed feet; the carving and execution is good throughout. The design is better seen in the three-backed settee (fig. 251), which must have at one time formed part of the set; this still possesses its original needlework.

A very interesting chair (fig. 254), with a curious mixture of styles, is given at the end of the volume to show what unexpected complications of design could be united in a fine piece of this kind. The hooped back and its decoration is of the time of Anne, the arms and their supports are about 1725, while the legs are about 1730, which is probably the date of the chair; it is of the finest quality throughout, and covered with its original needlework.

Beds of both Gothic and Chinese designs were also made between 1750 and 1765. Fig. 252 is a specimen with an elaborate Gothic cresting consisting of a series of arches filled with the same tracery; at the corners and centres are scrolled finials of acanthus, and cluster-columns form the posts. The hangings are entirely modern and incorrect in form. It should be noticed that the headings of beds at this time are somewhat reduced in scale and no longer assume the proportions of those made earlier in the century, for although in fig. 253 the carving and design of the cresting is most intricate, the detail of the ornament is small, and the open-work tabs here introduced often formed an elaborate feature in beds later than this example; the posts are of fine workmanship, the frame and lions'-paw feet being carved in a rich manner; the pillow-heading rises in two long S scrolls enclosing a finer tracery. The date is about 1755.

It has been shown that towards the end of the seventeenth century decoration on furniture was principally represented by marqueterie or different processes of veneer, for the elaborate carving in soft woods, either



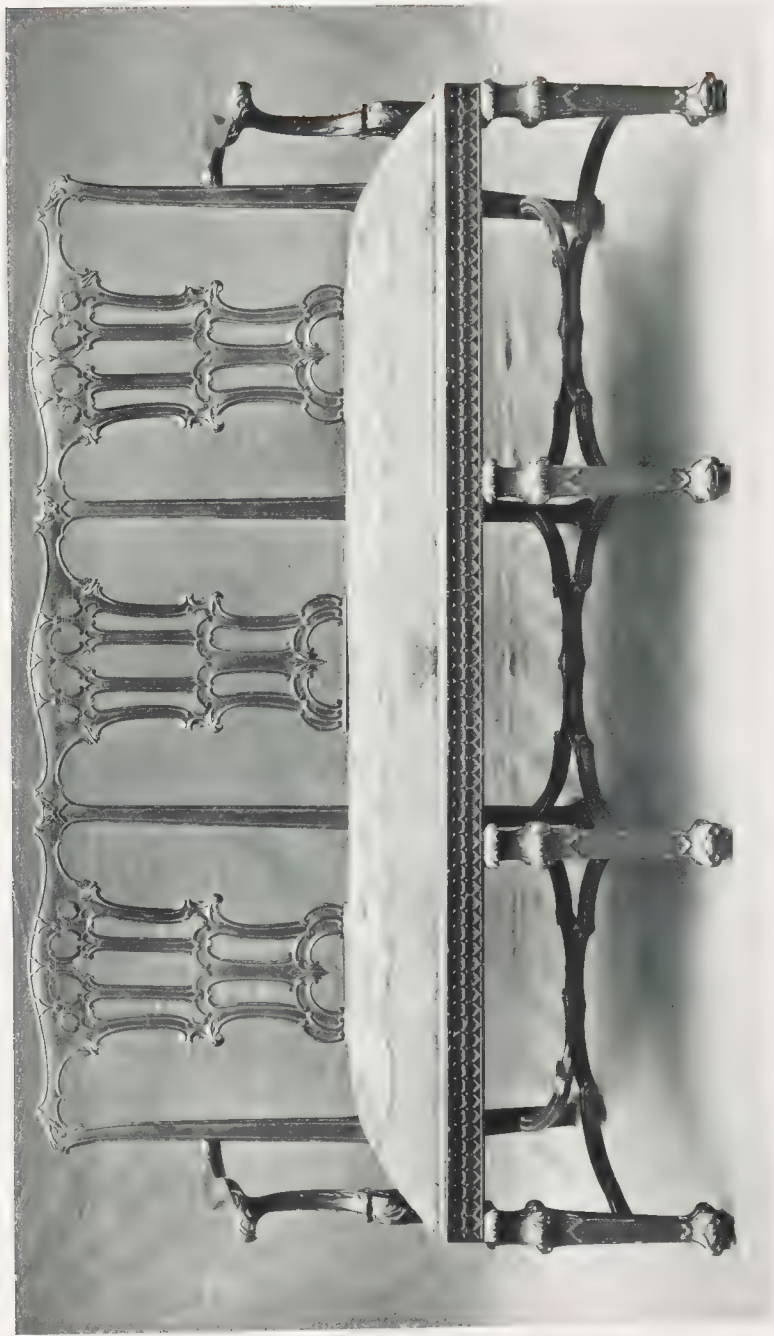


FIG. 251.—MAHOOGANY SETTEE. Length, 5 feet 9 inches; height, 3 feet 4 inches  
Property of MESSRS. J. MALLETT AND SON.





FIG. 252.—MAHOGANY BED. Height, 8 feet 6 inches. Property of MESSRS. ISAACS.





FIG. 253.—MAHOGANY BED. Height, 8 feet 8 inches. Property of FRANK PARTRIDGE, Esq.

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gilt or painted, was chiefly used for console-tables, mirrors, and beds. The early mahogany furniture of 1715 was solid and simple, and consisted principally of chairs, stools, and settees, the decoration on these being generally confined to a shell on the shoulders of the leg, with some slight ornamentation above the splat. The true spirit of the age of mahogany did not commence till about 1725 and terminated about 1770, when inlaying once more came into fashion. The carving of this Age of Mahogany can be briefly divided into three periods. Beginning with an almost barbaric boldness, it culminated into a redundancy of fantastic and finely carved ornament, and finished finally in an altogether severer taste. After the gradual disappearance of the C scroll and cabriole leg, the influence of seventeenth-century design and the technique of Grinling Gibbon was exchanged for an adaptation of classical and Italian styles, of which Robert Adam and Pergolesi were the founders, Hepplewhite, Sheraton, and Shearer being more or less their disciples. It is proved by the Nostell Priory library-table that the severer designs introduced by Robert Adam were in existence in 1766 and made use of by Chippendale when working in conjunction with him, but it is impossible to define the exact period when the gay and fanciful curves of Chippendale gave way to the more restrained and classical taste, or how far the florid style overlapped this latter fashion, with which it had little in common except the materials employed. It should be clearly understood that this volume is only intended to explain the historical evolution of artistic form in furniture by assigning dates according to the development of certain definite details, and not by theoretical attributions to individual designers and makers. It is always unwise to attempt to trace alterations in style merely by a date affixed to an illustration in one of the many books published between 1730 and 1765, for not only was plagiarism in design frequent, but the furniture had constantly been made some years before the publication of the book. Dates, in most instances, can only be fixed, and then only approximately, by careful observation in the steady evolution of individual characteristics and motives.



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The admirable qualities of mahogany quickly developed the talents and enthusiasm of the English carver, and in the execution of ornament in this wood he stands unrivalled, for the beautiful mahogany furniture made in France by Reisener, Jacob, etc., had always plain surfaces and was largely dependent on its metal fittings.

Our fine mahogany furniture of the eighteenth century is essentially connected with the English, for little or none of its construction was borrowed from abroad, and it holds a unique and unassailable position in the history of European furniture.



FIG. 254.—MAHOGANY ARM-CHAIR. Height, 3 feet 3 inches.  
Property of T. BASSETT, Esq.







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